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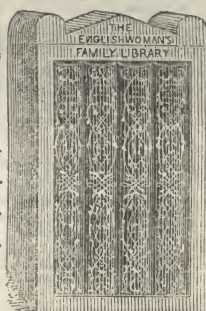
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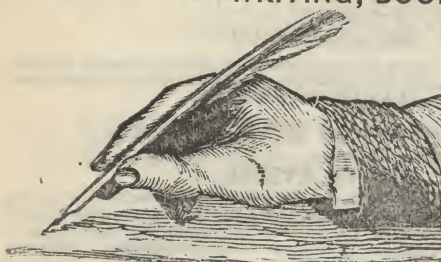
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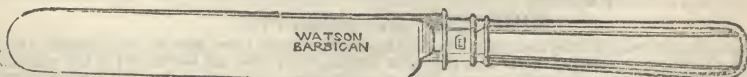
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Salt Ditto	6 0 „	12 0 Gilt	18 0 gilt,	Fish Knives	5 6 „	8 6 „	12 6 „
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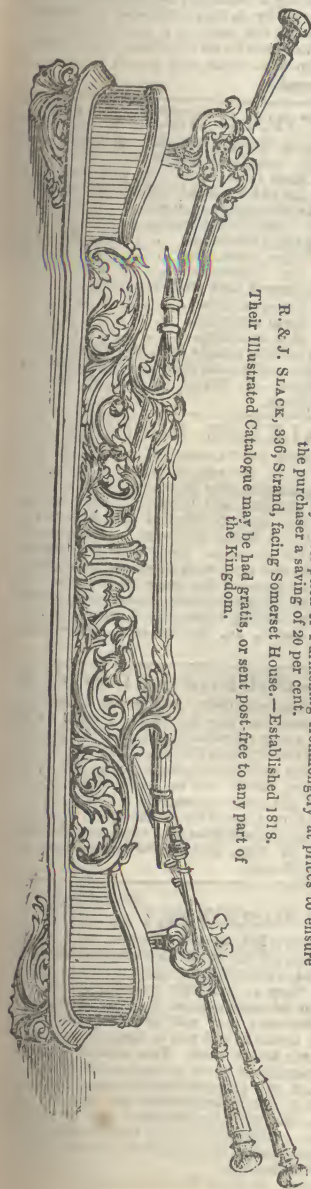
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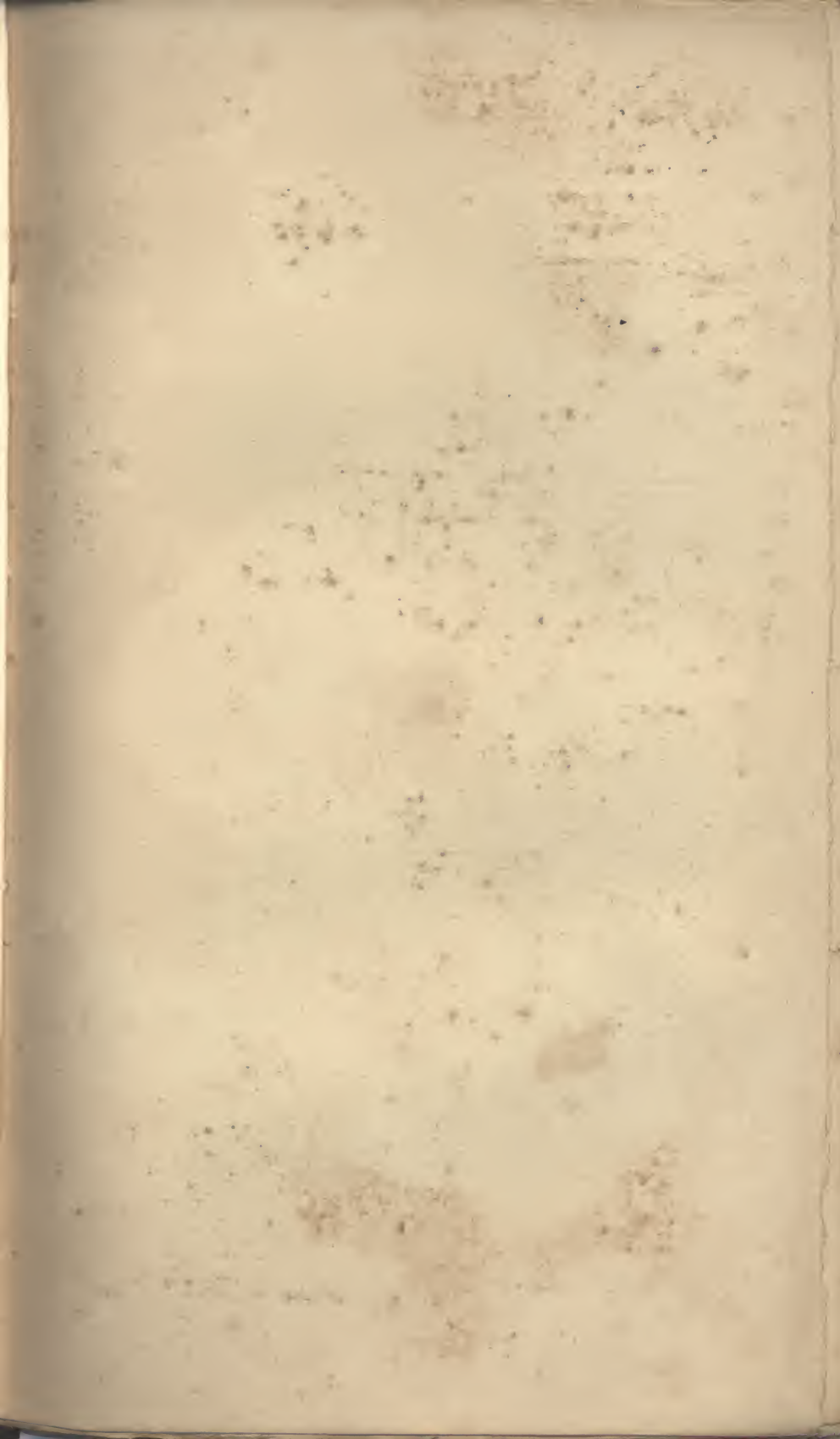
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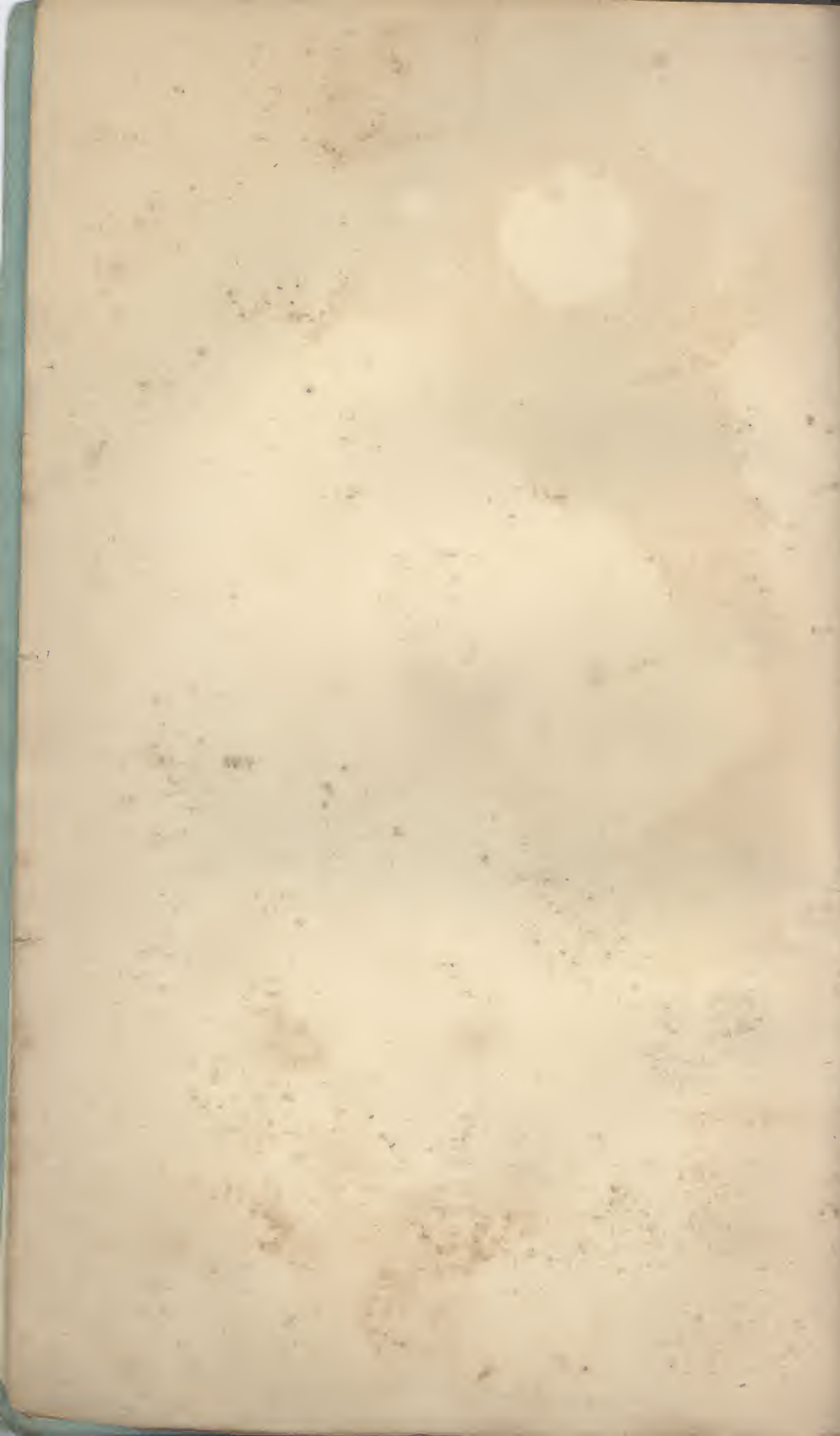




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CHAPTER XXX.

PROVES THAT CHANGES MAY BE RUNG IN THE BEST-REGULATED FAMILIES,
AND THAT MR. PECKSNIFF WAS A SPECIAL HAND AT A TRIPLE-BOB-
MAJOR.

As the surgeon's first care after amputating a limb is to take up the arteries the cruel knife has severed, so it is the duty of this history, which in its remorseless course has cut from the Pecksniffian trunk its right arm, Mercy, to look to the parent stem, and see how in all its various ramifications it got on without her.

And first of Mr. Pecksniff, it may be observed, that having provided for his younger daughter that choicest of blessings, a tender and indulgent husband; and having gratified the dearest wish of his parental heart by establishing her in life so happily; he renewed his youth, and spreading the plumage of his own bright conscience, felt himself equal to all kinds of flights. It is customary with fathers in stage-plays, after giving their daughters to the men of their hearts, to congratulate themselves on having no other business on their hands but to die immediately: though it is rarely found that they are in a hurry to do it. Mr. Pecksniff, being a father of a more sage and practical class, appeared to think that his immediate business was to live; and having deprived himself of one comfort, to surround himself with others.

But however much inclined the good man was, to be jocose and playful, and in the garden of his fancy to disport himself (if one may say so), like an architectural kitten, he had one impediment constantly opposed to him. The gentle Cherry, stung by a sense of slight and injury, which far from softening down or wearing out, rankled and festered in her heart—the gentle Cherry was in flat rebellion. She waged fierce war against her dear Papa; she led her parent what is usually called, for want of a better figure of speech, the life of a dog. But never did that dog live, in kennel, stable-yard, or house, whose life was half as hard as Mr. Pecksniff's with his gentle child.

The father and daughter were sitting at their breakfast. Tom had retired, and they were alone. Mr. Pecksniff frowned at first; but having cleared his brow, looked stealthily at his child. Her nose was very red indeed, and screwed up tight, with hostile preparation.

"Cherry," cried Mr. Pecksniff, "what is amiss between us? My child, why are we disunited?"

Miss Pecksniff's answer was scarcely a response to this gush of affection, for it was simply, "Bother, Pa!"

"Bother!" repeated Mr. Pecksniff, in a tone of anguish.

"Oh! 'tis too late, Pa," said his daughter, calmly, "to talk to me like that. I know what it means, and what its value is."

"This is hard!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, addressing his breakfast-cup. "This is very hard! She is my child. I carried her in my arms,

when she wore shapeless worsted shoes—I might say, mufflers—many years ago!”

“You need n’t taunt me with that, Pa,” retorted Cherry, with a spiteful look. “I am not so many years older than my sister, either, though she *is* married to your friend!”

“Ah, human nature, human nature! Poor human nature!” said Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his head at human nature as if he did n’t belong to it. “To think that this discord should arise from such a cause! oh dear, oh dear!”

“From such a cause indeed!” cried Cherry. “State the real cause, Pa, or I’ll state it myself. Mind! I will!”

Perhaps the energy with which she said this was infectious. However that may be, Mr. Pecksniff changed his tone and the expression of his face, for one of anger if not downright violence, when he said:

“You will! you have. You did yesterday. You do always. You have no decency; you make no secret of your temper; you have exposed yourself to Mr. Chuzzlewit, a hundred times.”

“Myself!” cried Cherry, with a bitter smile. “Oh indeed! I don’t mind that.”

“Me too, then,” said Mr. Pecksniff.

His daughter answered with a scornful laugh.

“And since we have come to an explanation, Charity,” said Mr. Pecksniff, rolling his head portentously, “let me tell you that I won’t allow it. None of your nonsense, Miss! I won’t permit it to be done.”

“I shall do,” said Charity, rocking her chair backwards and forwards, and raising her voice to a high pitch, “I shall do, Pa, what I please and what I have done. I am not going to be crushed in everything, depend upon it. I’ve been more shamefully used than anybody ever was in this world,” here she began to cry and sob, “and may expect the worst treatment from you, I know. But I don’t care for that. No I don’t!”

Mr. Pecksniff was made so desperate by the loud tone in which she spoke, that, after looking about him in frantic uncertainty for some means of softening it, he rose and shook her until the ornamental bow of hair upon her head nodded like a plume. She was so very much astonished by this assault, that it really had the desired effect.

“I’ll do it again!” cried Mr. Pecksniff as he resumed his seat, and fetched his breath, “if you dare to talk in that loud manner. How do you mean about being shamefully used? If Mr. Jonas chose your sister in preference to you, who could help it, I should wish to know? What have *I* to do with it?”

“Was n’t I made a convenience of? Were n’t my feelings trifled with? Did n’t he address himself to me first?” sobbed Cherry, clasping her hands; “and oh good gracious, that I should live to be shook!”

“You’ll live to be shaken again,” returned her parent, “if you drive me to that means of maintaining the decorum of this humble roof. You surprise me. I wonder you have not more spirit. If Mr. Jonas did n’t care for you, how could you wish to have him?”

“I wish to have him!” exclaimed Cherry. “I wish to have him, Pa!”

"Then what are you making all this piece of work for," retorted her father, "if you did n't wish to have him?"

"Because I was treated with duplicity," said Cherry; "and because my own sister and my own father conspired against me. I am not angry with *her*," said Cherry, looking much more angry than ever. "I pity her. I'm sorry for her. I know the fate that's in store for her, with that Wretch."

"Mr. Jonas will survive your calling him a wretch, my child, I dare say," said Mr. Pecksniff with returning resignation: "but call him what you like and make an end of it."

"Not an end Pa," said Charity. "No, not an end. That's not the only point on which we're not agreed. I won't submit to it. It's better you should know that, at once. No; I won't submit to it indeed Pa! I am not quite a fool, and I am not blind. All I have got to say, is, I won't submit to it."

Whatever she meant, she shook Mr. Pecksniff now; for his lame attempt to seem composed, was melancholy in the last degree. His anger changed to meekness, and his words were mild and fawning.

"My dear," he said; "if in the short excitement of an angry moment I resorted to any unjustifiable means of suppressing a little outbreak calculated to injure you as well as myself—it's possible I may have done so; perhaps I did—I ask your pardon. A father asking pardon of his child" said Mr. Pecksniff "is, I believe, a spectacle to soften the most rugged nature."

But it did n't at all soften Miss Pecksniff: perhaps because her nature was not rugged enough. On the contrary she persisted in saying, over and over again, that she wasn't quite a fool, and wasn't blind, and would n't submit to it.

"You labour under some mistake, my child!" said Mr. Pecksniff: "but I will not ask you what it is; I don't desire to know. No, pray!" he added, holding out his hand and colouring again, "let us avoid the subject my dear, whatever it is!"

"It's quite right that the subject should be avoided between us, Sir," said Cherry. "But I wish to be able to avoid it altogether, and consequently must beg you to provide me with a home."

Mr. Pecksniff looked about the room, and said "A home, my child!"

"Another home, Papa," said Cherry with increasing stateliness. "Place me at Mrs. Todgers's or somewhere, on an independent footing; but I will not live here, if such is to be the case."

It is possible that Miss Pecksniff saw in Mrs. Todgers's, a vision of enthusiastic men, pining to fall, in adoration, at her feet. It is possible that Mr. Pecksniff, in his new-born juvenility, saw in the suggestion of that same establishment, an easy means of relieving himself from an irksome charge in the way of temper and watchfulness. It is undoubtedly a fact that in the attentive ears of Mr. Pecksniff, the proposition did not sound quite like the dismal knell of all his hopes.

But he was a man of great feeling, and acute sensibility; and he squeezed his pocket-handkerchief against his eyes with both hands—as such men always do: especially when they are observed "One of my

birds," Mr. Pecksniff said, "has left me for the stranger's breast ; the other would take wing to Todgers's ! Well, well, what am I ? I don't know what I am, exactly. Never mind !"

Even this remark, made more pathetic perhaps by his breaking down in the middle of it, had no effect upon Charity. She was grim, rigid, and inflexible.

"But I have ever," said Mr. Pecksniff, "sacrificed my children's happiness to my own—I mean my own happiness to my children's—and I will not begin to regulate my life by other rules of conduct now. If you can be happier at Mrs. Todgers's than in your father's house, my dear, go to Mrs. Todgers's ! Do not think of me, my girl !" said Mr. Pecksniff, with emotion : "I shall get on pretty well, no doubt."

Miss Charity, who knew he had a secret pleasure in the contemplation of the proposed change, suppressed her own, and went on to negotiate the terms. His views upon this subject were at first so very limited that another difference, involving possibly another shaking, threatened to ensue ; but by degrees they came to something like an understanding, and the storm blew over. Indeed Miss Charity's idea was so agreeable to both, that it would have been strange if they had not come to an amicable agreement. It was soon arranged between them that the project should be tried, and that immediately ; and that Cherry's not being well, and needing change of scene, and wishing to be near her sister, should form the excuse for her departure, to Mr. Chuzzlewit and Mary, to both of whom she had pleaded indisposition for some time past. These premises agreed on, Mr. Pecksniff gave her his blessing, with all the dignity of a self-denying man who had made a hard sacrifice, but comforted himself with the reflection that virtue is its own reward. Thus they were reconciled for the first time since that not easily forgiven night, when Mr. Jonas, repudiating the elder, had confessed his passion for the younger sister, and Mr. Pecksniff had abetted him on moral grounds.

But how happened it—in the name of an unexpected addition to that small family, the Seven Wonders of the World, whatever and wherever they may be, how happened it—that Mr. Pecksniff and his daughter were about to part ? How happened it that their mutual relations were so greatly altered ? Why was Miss Pecksniff so clamorous to have it understood that she was neither blind nor foolish, and she wouldn't bear it ? It is not possible that Mr. Pecksniff had any thoughts of marrying again ! or that his daughter, with the sharp eye of a single woman, fathomed his design !

Let us inquire into this.

Mr. Pecksniff, as a man without reproach, from whom the breath of slander passed like common breath from any other polished surface, could afford to do what common men could not. He knew the purity of his own motives ; and when he had a motive worked at it as only a very good man (or a very bad one) can. Did he set before himself any strong and palpable motives for taking a second wife ? Yes : and not one or two of them, but a combination of very many.

Old Martin Chuzzlewit had gradually undergone an important change. Even upon the night when he made such an ill-timed arrival at Mr.

Pecksniff's house, he was comparatively subdued and easy to deal with. This Mr. Pecksniff attributed, at the time, to the effect his brother's death had had upon him. But from that hour his character seemed to have modified by regular degrees and to have softened down into a dull indifference for almost every one but Mr. Pecksniff. His looks were much the same as ever, but his mind was singularly altered. It was not that this or that passion stood out in brighter or in dimmer hues; but that the colour of the whole man was faded. As one trait disappeared, no other trait sprung up to take its place. His senses dwindled too. He was less keen of sight; was deaf sometimes; took little notice of what passed before him; and would be profoundly taciturn for days together. The process of this alteration was so easy, that almost as soon as it began to be observed it was complete. But Mr. Pecksniff saw it first, and having Anthony Chuzzlewit fresh in his recollection, saw in his brother Martin the same process of decay.

To a gentleman of Mr. Pecksniff's tenderness, this was a very mournful sight. He could not but foresee the probability of his respected relative being made the victim of designing persons, and of his riches falling into worthless hands. It gave him so much pain that he resolved to secure the property to himself; to keep bad testamentary suitors at a distance; to wall up the old gentleman, as it were, for his own use. By little and little, therefore, he began to try whether Mr. Chuzzlewit gave any promise of becoming an instrument in his hands; and finding that he did, and indeed that he was very supple in his plastic fingers, he made it the business of his life—kind soul!—to establish an ascendancy over him: and every little test he durst apply meeting with a success beyond his hopes, he began to think he heard old Martin's cash already chinking in his own unworldly pockets.

But when Mr. Pecksniff pondered on this subject (as, in his zealous way he often did), and thought with an uplifted heart of the train of circumstances which had delivered the old gentleman into his hands for the confusion of evil-doers and the triumph of a righteous nature, he always felt that Mary Graham was his stumbling-block. Let the old man say what he would, Mr. Pecksniff knew he had a strong affection for her. He knew that he showed it in a thousand little ways; that he liked to have her near him, and was never quite at ease when she was absent long. That he had ever really sworn to leave her nothing in his will, Mr. Pecksniff greatly doubted. That even if he had, there were many ways by which he could evade the oath and satisfy his conscience, Mr. Pecksniff knew. That her unprotected state was no light burden on the old man's mind, he also knew, for Mr. Chuzzlewit had plainly told him so. "Then," said Mr. Pecksniff, "what if I married her! What," repeated Mr. Pecksniff, sticking up his hair and glancing at his bust by Spoker: "What if, making sure of his approval first—he is nearly imbecile, poor gentleman—I married her!"

Mr. Pecksniff had a lively sense of the Beautiful: especially in women. His manner towards the sex, was remarkable for its insinuating character. It is recorded of him in another part of these pages, that he

embraced Mrs. Todgers on the smallest provocation : and it was a way he had : it was a part of the gentle placidity of his disposition. Before any thought of matrimony was in his mind, he had bestowed on Mary many little tokens of his spiritual admiration. They had been indignantly received, but that was nothing. True, as the idea expanded within him, these had become too ardent to escape the piercing eye of Cherry, who read his scheme at once ; but he had always felt the power of Mary's charms. So Interest and Inclination made a pair, and drew the curricie of Mr. Pecksniff's plan.

As to any thought of revenging himself on young Martin for his insolent expressions when they parted, and of shutting him out still more effectually from any hope of reconciliation with his grandfather, Mr. Pecksniff was much too meek and forgiving to be suspected of harbouring it. As to being refused by Mary, Mr. Pecksniff was quite satisfied that in her position she could never hold out if he and Mr. Chuzzlewit were both against her. As to consulting the wishes of her heart in such a case, it formed no part of Mr. Pecksniff's moral code ; for he knew what a good man he was, and what a blessing he must be, to anybody. His daughter having broken the ice, and the murder being out between them, Mr. Pecksniff had now only to pursue his design as cleverly as he could, and by the craftiest approaches.

"Well, my good Sir," said Mr. Pecksniff meeting old Martin in the garden, for it was his habit to walk in and out by that way, as the fancy took him : "and how is my dear friend this delicious morning?"

"Do you mean me?" asked the old man.

"Ah!" said Mr. Pecksniff, "one of his deaf days, I see. Could I mean any one else, my dear Sir?"

"You might have meant Mary," said the old man.

"Indeed I might. Quite true. I might speak of her as a dear, dear friend, I hope?" observed Mr. Pecksniff.

"I hope so," returned old Martin. "I think she deserves it."

"Think!" cried Pecksniff. "Think, Mr. Chuzzlewit!"

"You are speaking I know," returned Martin, "but I don't catch what you say. Speak up!"

"He's getting deader than a flint," said Pecksniff. "I was saying, my dear Sir, that I am afraid I must make up my mind to part with Cherry."

"What has *she* been doing?" asked the old man.

"He puts the most ridiculous questions I ever heard!" muttered Mr. Pecksniff. "He's a child to-day." After which he added, in a mild roar ; "She hasn't been doing anything, my dear friend."

"What are you going to part with her for?" demanded Martin.

"She hasn't her health by any means," said Mr. Pecksniff. "She misses her sister, my dear Sir; they doated on each other from the cradle. And I think of giving her a run in London for a change. A good long run Sir, if I find she likes it."

"Quite right," cried Martin. "It's judicious."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I hope you mean to bear me company in this dull part, while she's away?" said Mr. Pecksniff.

"I have no intention of removing from it," was Martin's answer.

"Then why," said Mr. Pecksniff, taking the old man's arm in his, and walking slowly on: "Why, my good Sir, can't you come and stay with me? I am sure I could surround you with more comforts—lowly as is my Cot, than you can obtain at a village house of entertainment. And pardon me, Mr. Chuzzlewit, pardon me if I say that such a place as the Dragon, however well-conducted (and, as far as I know, Mrs. Lupin is one of the worthiest creatures in this county), is hardly a home for Miss Graham."

Martin mused a moment: and then said, as he shook him by the hand,

"No. You're quite right; it is not."

"The very sight of skittles," Mr. Pecksniff eloquently pursued, "is far from being congenial to a delicate mind."

"It's an amusement of the vulgar," said old Martin, "certainly."

"Of the very vulgar," Mr. Pecksniff answered. "Then why not bring Miss Graham here, Sir? Here is the house! Here am I alone in it, for Thomas Pinch I do not count as any one. Our lovely friend shall occupy my daughter's chamber; you shall choose your own; we shall not quarrel, I hope!"

"We are not likely to do that," said Martin.

Mr. Pecksniff pressed his hand. "We understand each other, my dear Sir, I see!—I can wind him," he thought, with exultation, "round my little finger!"

"You leave the recompense to me?" said the old man, after a minute's silence.

"Oh! Do not speak of recompense!" cried Pecksniff.

"I say," repeated Martin, with a glimmer of his old obstinacy, "you leave the recompense to me. Do you?"

"Since you desire it, my good Sir."

"I always desire it," said the old man. "You know I always desire it. I wish to pay as I go, even when I buy of you. Not that I do not leave a balance to be settled one day, Pecksniff."

The architect was too much overcome to speak. He tried to drop a tear upon his patron's hand, but couldn't find one in his dry distillery.

"May that day be very distant!" was his pious exclamation. "Ah Sir! If I could say how deep an interest I have in you and yours! I allude to our beautiful young friend."

"True," he answered. "True. She need have some one interested in her. I did her wrong to train her as I did. Orphan though she was, she would have found some one to protect her whom she might have loved again. When she was a child, I pleased myself with the thought that in gratifying my whim of placing her between me and false-hearted knaves, I had done her a kindness. Now she is a woman, I have no such comfort. She has no protector but herself. I have put her at such odds with the world, that any dog may bark or fawn upon her at his pleasure. Indeed she stands in need of delicate consideration. Yes; indeed she does!"

"If her position could be altered and defined, Sir?" Mr. Pecksniff hinted.

"How can that be done? Should I make a seamstress of her, or a governess?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mr. Pecksniff. "My dear Sir, there are other ways. There are indeed. But I am much excited and embarrassed at present, and would rather not pursue the subject. I scarcely know what I mean. Permit me to resume it at another time."

"You are not unwell?" asked Martin anxiously.

"No, no!" cried Pecksniff. "No. Permit me to resume it at another time. I'll walk a little. Bless you!"

Old Martin blessed him in return, and squeezed his hand. As he turned away, and slowly walked towards the house, Mr. Pecksniff stood gazing after him: being pretty well recovered from his late emotion, which, in any other man, one might have thought had been assumed as a machinery for feeling Martin's pulse. The change in the old man found such a slight expression in his figure, that Mr. Pecksniff, looking after him, could not help saying to himself,

"And I can wind him round my little finger! Only think!"

Old Martin happening to turn his head, saluted him affectionately. Mr. Pecksniff returned the gesture.

"Why the time was," said Mr. Pecksniff; "and not long ago, when he would n't look at me! How soothing is this change. Such is the delicate texture of the human heart: so complicated is the process of its being softened! Externally he looks the same, and I can wind him round my little finger. Only think!"

In sober truth, there did appear to be nothing on which Mr. Pecksniff might not have ventured with Martin Chuzzlewit; for whatever Mr. Pecksniff said or did was right, and whatever he advised was done. Martin had escaped so many snares from needy fortune-hunters, and had withered in the shell of his suspicion and distrust for so many years, but to become the good man's tool and plaything. With the happiness of this conviction painted on his face, the architect went forth upon his morning walk.

The summer weather in his bosom was reflected in the breast of Nature. Through deep green vistas where the boughs arched over-head, and showed the sunlight flashing in the beautiful perspective; through dewy fern from which the startled hares leaped up, and fled at his approach; by mantled pools, and fallen trees, and down in hollow places, rustling among last year's leaves whose scent was Memory; the placid Pecksniff strolled. By meadow gates and hedges fragrant with wild roses; and by thatched-roofed cottages whose inmates humbly bowed before him as a man both good and wise; the worthy Pecksniff walked in tranquil meditation. The bee passed onward, humming of the work he had to do; the idle gnats for ever going round and round in one contracting and expanding ring, yet always going on as fast as he, danced merrily before him; the colour of the long grass came and went, as if the light clouds made it timid as they floated through the distant air. The birds, so many Pecksniff consciences, sang gaily upon every branch; and

Mr. Pecksniff paid *his* homage to the day by ruminating on his projects as he walked along.

Chancing to trip, in his abstraction, over the spreading root of an old tree, he raised his pious eyes to take a survey of the ground before him. It startled him to see the embodied image of his thoughts not far a-head. Mary herself. And alone.

At first Mr. Pecksniff stopped, as if with the intention of avoiding her; but his next impulse was, to advance, which he did at a brisk pace; carolling as he went, so sweetly and with so much innocence, that he only wanted feathers and wings to be a bird.

Hearing notes behind her, not belonging to the songsters of the grove, she looked round. Mr. Pecksniff kissed his hand, and was at her side immediately.

"Communing with Nature?" said Mr. Pecksniff. "So am I."

She said the morning was so beautiful that she had walked further than she intended and would return. Mr. Pecksniff said it was exactly his case, and he would return with her.

"Take my arm, sweet girl," said Mr. Pecksniff.

Mary declined it, and walked so very fast that he remonstrated. "You were loitering when I came upon you," Mr. Pecksniff said. "Why be so cruel as to hurry now! You would not shun me, would you?"

"Yes, I would," she answered, turning her glowing cheek indignantly upon him, "you know I would. Release me, Mr. Pecksniff. Your touch is disagreeable to me."

His touch! What, that chaste patriarchal touch which Mrs. Todgers—surely a discreet lady—had endured, not only without complaint, but with apparent satisfaction! This was positively wrong. Mr. Pecksniff was sorry to hear her say it.

"If you have not observed," said Mary, "that it is so, pray take the assurance from my lips, and do not, as you are a gentleman, continue to offend me."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Pecksniff, mildly, "I feel that I might consider this becoming in a daughter of my own, and why should I object to it in one so beautiful! It's harsh. It cuts me to the soul," said Mr. Pecksniff: "but I cannot quarrel with you, Mary."

She tried to say she was sorry to hear it, but burst into tears. Mr. Pecksniff now repeated the Todgers performance on a comfortable scale, as if he intended it to last some time; and in his disengaged hand, catching hers, employed himself in separating the fingers with his own, and sometimes kissing them, as he pursued the conversation thus:

"I am glad we met. I am very glad we met. I am able now to ease my bosom of a heavy load, and speak to you in confidence. Mary," said Mr. Pecksniff, in his tenderest tones: indeed, they were so very tender that he almost squeaked: "My soul! I love you!"

A fantastic thing, that maiden affectation! She made-believe to shudder.

"I love you," said Mr. Pecksniff, "my gentle life, with a devotion which is quite surprising, even to myself. I did suppose that the sensation was buried in the silent tomb of a lady, only second to you in qualities of the mind and form; but I find I am mistaken."

She tried to disengage her hand, but might as well have tried to free herself from the embrace of an affectionate boa constrictor: if anything so wily may be brought into comparison with Pecksniff.

"Although I am a widower," said Mr. Pecksniff, examining the rings upon her fingers, and tracing the course of one delicate blue vein with his fat thumb, "a widower with two daughters, still I am not encumbered, my love. One of them, as you know, is married. The other, by her own desire, but with a view, I will confess—why not?—to my altering my condition, is about to leave her father's house. I have a character, I hope. People are pleased to speak well of me, I think. My person and manner are not absolutely those of a monster, I trust. Ah, naughty Hand!" said Mr. Pecksniff, apostrophising the reluctant prize, "why did you take me prisoner! Go, go!"

He slapped the hand to punish it; but relenting, folded it in his waistcoat, to comfort it again.

"Blessed in each other, and in the society of our venerable friend, my darling," said Mr. Pecksniff, "we shall be happy. When he is wafsted to a haven of rest, we will console each other. My pretty primrose, what do you say?"

"It is possible," Mary answered, in a hurried manner, "that I ought to feel grateful for this mark of your confidence. I cannot say that I do, but I am willing to suppose you may deserve my thanks. Take them; and pray leave me, Mr. Pecksniff."

The good man smiled a greasy smile: and drew her closer to him.

"Pray, pray release me, Mr. Pecksniff. I cannot listen to your proposal. I cannot receive it. There are many to whom it may be acceptable, but it is not so to me. As an act of kindness and an act of pity, leave me!"

Mr. Pecksniff walked on with his arm round her waist, and her hand in his, as contentedly as if they had been all in all to each other, and were joined together in the bonds of truest love.

"If you force me by your superior strength," said Mary, who finding that good words had not the least effect upon him, made no further effort to suppress her indignation: "if you force me by your superior strength to accompany you back, and to be the subject of your insolence upon the way, you cannot constrain the expression of my thoughts. I hold you in the deepest abhorrence. I know your real nature and despise it."

"No, no," said Mr. Pecksniff, sweetly. "No, no, no!"

"By what arts or unhappy chances you have gained your influence over Mr. Chuzzlewit, I do not know," said Mary: "it may be strong enough to soften even this, but he shall know of this, trust me, Sir."

Mr. Pecksniff raised his heavy eyelids languidly, and let them fall again. It was saying with perfect coolness, "Aye, aye! Indeed!"

"Is it not enough," said Mary, "that you warp and change his nature, adapt his every prejudice to your bad ends, and harden a heart naturally kind by shutting out the truth and allowing none but false and distorted views to reach it; is it not enough that you have the power of doing this, and that you exercise it, but must you also be so coarse, so cruel, and so cowardly to me?"

Still Mr. Pecksniff led her calmly on, and looked as mild as any lamb that ever pastured in the fields.

"Will nothing move you, sir!" cried Mary.

"My dear," observed Mr. Pecksniff, with a placid leer, "a habit of self-examination, and the practice of—shall I say of virtue?"

"Of hypocrisy," said Mary.

"No, no," resumed Mr. Pecksniff, chafing the captive hand reproachfully: "of virtue—have enabled me to set such guards upon myself, that it is really difficult to ruffle me. It is a curious fact, but it is difficult, do you know, for any one to ruffle me. And did she think," said Mr. Pecksniff, with a playful tightening of his grasp, "that *she* could! How little did she know his heart!"

Little indeed! Her mind was so strangely constituted that she would have preferred the caresses of a toad, an adder, or a serpent: nay, the hug of a bear: to the endearments of Mr. Pecksniff.

"Come, come," said that good gentleman, "a word or two will set this matter right, and establish a pleasant understanding between us. I am not angry, my love."

"You angry!"

"No," said Mr. Pecksniff, "I am not. I say so. Neither are you."

There was a beating heart beneath his hand that told another story though.

"I am sure you are not," said Mr. Pecksniff: "and I will tell you why. There are two Martin Chuzzlewits, my dear; and your carrying your anger to one might have a serious effect, who knows, upon the other. You wouldn't wish to hurt him, would you!"

She trembled violently, and looked at him with such a proud disdain that he turned his eyes away. No doubt lest he should be offended with her in spite of his better self.

"A passive quarrel, my love," said Mr. Pecksniff, "may be changed into an active one, remember. It would be sad to blight even a disinherited young man in his already blighted prospects: but how easy to do it. Ah, how easy! *Have* I influence with our venerable friend, do you think? Well, perhaps I have. Perhaps I have."

He raised his eyes to hers; and nodded with an air of banter that was charming.

"No," he continued, thoughtfully. "Upon the whole, my sweet, if I were you, I'd keep my secret to myself. I am not at all sure: very far from it: that it would surprise our friend in any way, for he and I have had some conversation together only this morning, and he is anxious, very anxious, to establish you in some more settled manner. But whether he was surprised or not surprised, the consequence of your imparting it might be the same. Martin, junior, might suffer severely. I'd have compassion on Martin, junior, do you know!" said Mr. Pecksniff, with a persuasive smile. "Yes. He don't deserve it, but I would."

She wept so bitterly now, and was so much distressed, that he thought it prudent to unclasp her waist, and hold her only by the hand.

"As to our own share in the precious little mystery," said Mr. Pecksniff, "we will keep it to ourselves, and talk of it between ourselves,

and you shall think it over. You will consent, my love; you will consent, I know. Whatever you may think; you will. I seem to remember to have heard: I really don't know where, or how:" he added, with bewitching frankness, "that you and Martin junior, when you were children, had a sort of childish fondness for each other. When we are married, you shall have the satisfaction of thinking that it did n't last, to ruin him, but passed away, to do him good; for we'll see then, what we can do to put some trifling help in Martin junior's way. *Have* I any influence with our venerable friend? Well! Perhaps I have. Perhaps I have."

The outlet from the wood in which these tender passages occurred, was close to Mr. Pecksniff's house. They were now so near it that he stopped, and holding up her little finger, said in playful accents, as a parting fancy:

"Shall I bite it?"

Receiving no reply he kissed it instead; and then stooping down, inclined his flabby face to hers—he had a flabby face, although he *was* a good man—and with a blessing, which from such a source was quite enough to set her up in life, and prosper her for that time forth, permitted her to leave him.

Gallantry in its true sense is supposed to ennoble and dignify a man; and love has shed refinements on innumerable Cymons. But Mr. Pecksniff: perhaps because to one of his exalted nature these were mere grossnesses: certainly did not appear to any unusual advantage, now that he was left alone. On the contrary, he seemed to be shrunk and reduced; to be trying to hide himself within himself; and to be wretched at not having the power to do it. His shoes looked too large; his sleeves looked too long; his hair looked too limp; his hat looked too little; his features looked too mean; his exposed throat looked as if a halter would have done it good. For a minute or two, in fact, he was hot, and pale, and mean, and shy, and slinking, and consequently not at all Pecksniffian. But after that, he recovered himself, and went home with as beneficent an air as if he had been the High Priest of the summer weather.

"I have arranged to go, Papa," said Charity, "to-morrow."

"So soon, my child!"

"I can't go too soon," said Charity, "under the circumstances. I have written to Mrs. Todgers to propose an arrangement, and have requested her to meet me at the coach, at all events. You'll be quite your own master now, Mr. Pinch!"

Mr. Pecksniff had just gone out of the room, and Tom had just come into it.

"My own master!" repeated Tom.

"Yes, you'll have nobody to interfere with you," said Charity. "At least I hope you won't. Hem! It's a changing world."

"What! are—are *you* going to be married, Miss Pecksniff?" asked Tom in great surprise.

"Not exactly," faltered Cherry. "I have n't made up my mind to be. I believe I could be, if I chose, Mr. Pinch."

"Of course you could!" said Tom. And he said it in perfect good faith. He believed it from the bottom of his heart.

"No," said Cherry. "*I* am not going to be married. Nobody is, that I know of. Hem! But I am not going to live with Papa. I have my reasons, but it's all a secret. I shall always feel very kindly towards you, I assure you, for the boldness you showed that night. As to you and me, Mr. Pinch, *we* part the best friends, possible!"

Tom thanked her for her confidence, and for her friendship, but there was a mystery in the former, which perfectly bewildered him. In his extravagant devotion to the family, he had felt the loss of Merry more than any one but those who knew that for all the slights he underwent he thought his own demerits were to blame, could possibly have understood. He had scarcely reconciled himself to that, when here was Charity about to leave them. She had grown up, as it were under Tom's eye. The sisters were a part of Pecksniff, and a part of Tom; items in Pecksniff's goodness, and in Tom's service. He could n't bear it: not two hours' sleep had Tom that night, through dwelling in his bed upon these dreadful changes.

When morning dawned, he thought he must have dreamed this piece of ambiguity; but no, on going down stairs he found them packing trunks and cording boxes, and making other preparations for Miss Charity's departure, which lasted all day long. In good time for the evening-coach, Miss Charity deposited her housekeeping keys with much ceremony upon the parlour table; took a gracious leave of all the house; and quitted her paternal roof—a blessing, for which the Pecksniffian servant was observed by some profane persons to be particularly active in the thanksgiving at church next Sunday.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. PINCH IS DISCHARGED OF A DUTY WHICH HE NEVER OWED TO ANYBODY; AND MR. PECKSNIFF DISCHARGES A DUTY WHICH HE OWES TO SOCIETY.

THE closing words of the last chapter, lead naturally to the commencement of this, its successor; for it has to do with a church. With the church so often mentioned heretofore, in which Tom Pinch played the organ for nothing.

One sultry afternoon, about a week after Miss Charity's departure for London, Mr. Pecksniff being out walking by himself, took it into his head to stray into the churchyard. As he was lingering among the tombstones, endeavouring to extract an available sentiment or two from the epitaphs—for he never lost an opportunity of making up a few moral crackers, to be let off as occasion served—Tom Pinch began to practise. Tom could run down to the church and do so whenever he had time to spare; for it was a simple little organ, provided with wind by the action of the musician's feet; and he was independent, even of a

bellows-blower. Though if Tom had wanted one at any time, there was not a man or boy in all the village, and away to the turnpike (tollman included), but would have blown away for him till he was black in the face.

Mr. Pecksniff had no objection to music; not the least. He was tolerant of everything—he often said so. He considered it a vagabond kind of trifling, in general, just suited to Tom's capacity. But in regard to Tom's performance upon this same organ, he was remarkably lenient, singularly amiable; for when Tom played it on Sundays, Mr. Pecksniff in his unbounded sympathy felt as if he played it himself, and were a benefactor to the congregation. So whenever it was impossible to devise any other means of taking the value of Tom's wages out of him, Mr. Pecksniff gave him leave to cultivate this instrument. For which mark of his consideration, Tom was very grateful.

The afternoon was remarkably warm, and Mr. Pecksniff had been strolling a long way. He had not what may be called a fine ear for music, but he knew when it had a tranquillising influence on his soul; and that was the case now, for it sounded to him like a melodious snore. He approached the church, and looking through the diamond lattice of a window near the porch, saw Tom, with the curtains in the loft drawn back, playing away with great expression and tenderness.

The church had an inviting air of coolness. The old oak roof supported by cross-beams, the hoary walls, the marble tablets, and the cracked stone pavement, were refreshing to look at. There were leaves of ivy tapping gently at the opposite windows; and the sun poured in through only one: leaving the body of the church in tempting shade. But the most tempting spot of all, was one red-curtained and soft-cushioned pew, wherein the official dignitaries of the place (of whom Mr. Pecksniff was the head and chief) enshrined themselves on Sundays. Mr. Pecksniff's seat was in the corner: a remarkably comfortable corner: where his very large Prayer-Book was at that minute making the most of its quarto self upon the desk. He determined to go in and rest.

He entered very softly; in part because it was a church; in part because his tread was always soft; in part because Tom played a solemn tune; in part because he thought he would surprise him when he stopped. Unbolting the door of the high pew of state, he glided in and shut it after him; then sitting in his usual place, and stretching out his legs upon the hassocks, he composed himself to listen to the music.

It is an unaccountable circumstance that he should have felt drowsy there, where the force of association might surely have been enough to keep him wide awake; but he did. He had not been in the snug little corner five minutes before he began to nod. He had not recovered himself one minute before he began to nod again. In the very act of opening his eyes indolently, he nodded again. In the very act of shutting them, he nodded again. So he fell out of one nod into another until at last he ceased to nod at all, and was as fast as the church itself.

He had a consciousness of the organ, long after he fell asleep, though as to its being an organ he had no more idea of that, than he had of its being a Bull. After a while he began to have at intervals the same

dreamy impression of voices ; and awakening to an indolent curiosity upon the subject, opened his eyes.

He was so indolent, that after glancing at the hassocks and the pew, he was already half-way off to sleep again, when it occurred to him that there really were voices in the church : low voices, talking earnestly hard by : while the echoes seemed to mutter responses. He roused himself, and listened.

Before he had listened half a dozen seconds, he became as broad awake as ever he had been in all his life. With eyes, and ears, and mouth, wide open, he moved himself a very little with the utmost caution, and gathering the curtain in his hand, peeped out.

Tom Pinch and Mary. Of course. He had recognised their voices, and already knew the topic they discussed. Looking like the small end of a guillotined man, with his chin on a level with the top of the pew, so that he might duck down immediately in case of either of them turning round, he listened. Listened with such concentrated eagerness, that his very hair and shirt-collar stood bristling up to help him.

"No," cried Tom. "No letters have ever reached me, except that one from New York. But don't be uneasy on that account, for it's very likely they have gone away to some far-off place, where the posts are neither regular nor frequent. He said in that very letter that it might be so, even in that city to which they thought of travelling—Eden, you know."

"It is a great weight upon my mind," said Mary.

"Oh, but you must n't let it be," said Tom. "There's a true saying that nothing travels so fast as ill news ; and if the slightest harm had happened to Martin, you may be sure you would have heard of it long ago. I have often wished to say this to you," Tom continued with an embarrassment that became him very well, "but you have never given me an opportunity."

"I have sometimes been almost afraid," said Mary, "that you might suppose I hesitated to confide in you, Mr. Pinch."

"No," Tom stammered, "I—I am not aware that I ever supposed that. I am sure that if I have, I have checked the thought directly, as an injustice to you. I feel the delicacy of your situation in having to confide in me at all," said Tom, "but I would risk my life to save you from one day's uneasiness : indeed I would !"

Poor Tom !

"I have dreaded sometimes," Tom continued, "that I might have displeased you by—by having the boldness to try and anticipate your wishes now and then. At other times I have fancied that your kindness prompted you to keep aloof from me."

"Indeed !"

"It was very foolish : very presumptuous and ridiculous : to think so," Tom pursued : "but I feared you might suppose it possible that I—I—should admire you too much for my own peace ; and so denied yourself the slight assistance you would otherwise have accepted from me. If such an idea has ever presented itself to you," faltered Tom, "pray dismiss it. I am easily made happy : and I shall live contented

here long after you and Martin have forgotten me. I am a poor, shy, awkward, creature : not at all a man of the world : and you should think no more of me, bless you, than if I were an old friar !”

If friars bear such hearts as thine, Tom, let friars multiply ; though they have no such rule in all their stern arithmetic.

“ Dear Mr. Pinch !” said Mary, giving him her hand ; “ I cannot tell you how your kindness moves me. I have never wronged you by the lightest doubt, and have never for an instant ceased to feel that you were all ; much more than all ; that Martin found you. Without the silent care and friendship I have experienced from you, my life here would have been unhappy. But you have been a good angel to me ; filling me with gratitude of heart, hope, and courage.”

“ I am as little like an angel, I am afraid,” replied Tom, shaking his head, “ as any stone cherubim among the gravestones ; and I don’t think there are many real angels of *that* pattern. But I should like to know (if you will tell me) why you have been so very silent about Martin.”

“ Because I have been afraid,” said Mary, “ of injuring you.”

“ Of injuring me !” cried Tom.

“ Of doing you an injury with your employer.

The gentleman in question dived.

“ With Pecksniff !” rejoined Tom, with cheerful confidence. “ Oh dear, he’d never think of us ! He’s the best of men. The more at ease you were, the happier he would be. Oh dear, you need n’t be afraid of Pecksniff. He is not a spy.”

Many a man in Mr. Pecksniff’s place, if he could have dived through the floor of the pew of state and come out at Calcutta or any inhabited region on the other side of the earth, would have done it instantly. Mr. Pecksniff sat down upon a hassock, and listening more attentively than ever, smiled.

Mary seemed to have expressed some dissent in the meanwhile, for Tom went on to say, with honest energy :

“ Well, I don’t know how it is, but it always happens, whenever I express myself in this way, to anybody almost, that I find they won’t do justice to Pecksniff. It is one of the most extraordinary circumstances that ever came within my knowledge, but it is so. There’s John Westlock, who used to be a pupil here, one of the best-hearted young men in the world, in all other matters—I really believe John would have Pecksniff flogged at the cart’s tail if he could. And John is not a solitary case, for every pupil we have had in my time has gone away with the same inveterate hatred of him. There was Mark Tapley, too, quite in another station of life,” said Tom : “ the mockery he used to make of Pecksniff when he was at the Dragon was shocking. Martin too : Martin was worse than any of ’em. But I forgot. He prepared you to dislike Pecksniff, of course. So you came with a prejudice, you know, Miss Graham, and are not a fair witness.”

Tom triumphed very much in this discovery, and rubbed his hands with great satisfaction.

“ Mr. Pinch,” said Mary, “ you mistake him.”

“ No, no !” cried Tom. “ *You* mistake him. But,” he added, with a

rapid change in his tone, "what is the matter? Miss Graham, what is the matter!"

Mr. Pecksniff brought up to the top of the pew, by slow degrees, his hair, his forehead, his eyebrow, his eye. She was sitting on a bench beside the door with her hands before her face; and Tom was bending over her.

"What is the matter!" cried Tom. "Have I said anything to hurt you? Has any one said anything to hurt you? Don't cry. Pray tell me what it is. I cannot bear to see you so distressed. Mercy on us, I never was so surprised and grieved in all my life!"

Mr. Pecksniff kept his eye in the same place. He could have moved it now for nothing short of a gimlet or a red-hot wire.

"I wouldn't have told you, Mr. Pinch," said Mary, "if I could have helped it; but your delusion is so absorbing, and it is so necessary that we should be upon our guard; that you should not be compromised; and to that end that you should know by whom I am beset; that no alternative is left me. I came here purposely to tell you, but I think I should have wanted courage if you had not chanced to lead me so directly to the object of my coming."

Tom gazed at her stedfastly, and seemed to say, "What else?" But he said not a word.

"That person whom you think the best of men," said Mary, looking up, and speaking with a quivering lip and flashing eye:

"Lord bless me!" muttered Tom, staggering back. "Wait a moment. That person whom I think the best of men! You mean Pecksniff, of course. Yes, I see you mean Pecksniff. Good gracious me, don't speak without authority. What has he done? If he is not the best of men, what is he?"

"The worst. The falsest, craftiest, meanest, cruelest, most sordid, most shameless," said the trembling girl—trembling with her indignation.

Tom sat down on a seat, and clasped his hands.

"What is he," said Mary, "who receiving me in his house as his guest: his unwilling guest: knowing my history, and how defenceless and alone I am, presumes before his daughters to affront me so that if I had a brother but a child, who saw it, he would instinctively have helped me?"

"He is a scoundrel!" exclaimed Tom. "Whoever he may be, he is a scoundrel."

Mr. Pecksniff dived again.

"What is he," said Mary, "who, when my only friend: a dear and kind one too: was in full health of mind, humbled himself before him, but was spurned away (for he knew him then) like a dog. Who, in his forgiving spirit, now that that friend is sunk into a failing state, can crawl about him again, and use the influence he basely gains, for every base and wicked purpose, and not for one—not one—that's true or good?"

"I say he is a scoundrel," answered Tom.

"But what is he: oh Mr. Pinch, what is he: who, thinking he could compass these designs the better were I his wife, assails me with the

coward's argument that if I marry him, Martin, on whom I have brought so much misfortune, shall be restored to something of his former hopes ; and if I do not, shall be plunged in deeper ruin ? What is he who makes my very constancy to one I love with all my heart a torture to myself and wrong to him ; who makes me, do what I will, the instrument to hurt a head I would heap blessings on ! What is he who, winding all these cruel snares about me, explains their purpose to me, with a smooth tongue and a smiling face, in the broad light of day : dragging me on the while in his embrace, and holding to his lips a hand," pursued the agitated girl, extending it, "which I would have struck off, if with it I could lose the shame and degradation of his touch?"

"I say," cried Tom, in great excitement, "he is a scoundrel and a villain. I don't care who he is, I say he is a double-dyed and most intolerable villain !"

Covering her face with her hands again, as if the passion which had sustained her through these disclosures lost itself in an overwhelming sense of shame and grief, she abandoned herself to tears.

Any sight of distress was sure to move the tenderness of Tom, but this especially. Tears and sobs from her, were arrows in his heart. He tried to comfort her ; sat down beside her ; expended all his store of homely eloquence ; and spoke in words of praise and hope of Martin. Ay, though he loved her from his soul with such a self-denying love as woman seldom wins : he spoke from first to last of Martin. Not the wealth of the rich Indies would have tempted Tom to shirk one mention of her lover's name.

When she was more composed, she impressed upon Tom that this man she had described, was Pecksniff in his real colours ; and word by word and phrase by phrase, as well as she remembered it, related what had passed between them in the wood : which was no doubt a source of high gratification to that gentleman himself, who in his desire to see and his dread of being seen, was constantly diving down into the state pew, and coming up again like the intelligent householder in Punch's Show, who avoids being knocked on the head with a cudgel. When she had concluded her account, and had besought Tom to be very distant and unconscious in his manner towards her after this explanation, and had thanked him very much, they parted on the alarm of footsteps in the burial-ground ; and Tom was left alone in the church again.

And now the full agitation and misery of the disclosure, came rushing upon Tom indeed. The star of his whole life from boyhood, had become, in a moment, putrid vapour. It was not that Pecksniff : Tom's Pecksniff : had ceased to exist, but that he never had existed. In his death, Tom would have had the comfort of remembering what he used to be, but in this discovery, he had the anguish of recollecting what he never was. For as Tom's blindness in this matter had been total and not partial, so was his restored sight. *His* Pecksniff could never have worked the wickedness of which he had just now heard, but any other Pecksniff could ; and the Pecksniff who could do that, could do anything, and no doubt had been doing anything and everything except the right

thing, all through his career. From the lofty height on which poor Tom had placed his idol it was tumbled down headlong, and

Not all the king's horses nor all the king's men
Could have set Mr. Pecksniff up again.

Legions of Titans could n't have got him out of the mud ; and serve him right. But it was not he who suffered ; it was Tom. His compass was broken, his chart destroyed, his chronometer had stopped, his masts were gone by the board ; his anchor was adrift, ten thousand leagues away.

Mr. Pecksniff watched him with a lively interest, for he divined the purpose of Tom's ruminations, and was curious to see how he conducted himself. For some time, Tom wandered up and down the aisle like a man demented, stopping occasionally to lean against a pew and think it over ; then he stood staring at a blank old monument bordered tastefully with skulls and cross-bones, as if it were the finest work of Art he had ever seen, although at other times he held it in unspeakable contempt ; then he sat down ; and then walked to and fro again ; and then went wandering up into the organ-loft, and touched the keys. But their minstrelsy was changed, their music gone ; and sounding one long melancholy chord, Tom drooped his head upon his hands, and gave it up as hopeless.

"I would n't have cared," said Tom Pinch, rising from his stool, and looking down into the church as if he had been the Clergyman, "I would n't have cared for anything he might have done to Me, for I have tried his patience often, and have lived upon his sufferance, and have never been the help to him that others could have been. I would n't have minded, Pecksniff," Tom continued, little thinking who heard him, "if you had done Me any wrong ; I could have found plenty of excuses for that ; and though you might have hurt me, could have still gone on respecting you. But why did you ever fall so low as this in my esteem ! Oh Pecksniff, Pecksniff, there is nothing I would not have given to have had you deserve my old opinion of you ; nothing !"

Mr. Pecksniff sat upon the hassock pulling up his shirt-collar, while Tom, touched to the quick, delivered this apostrophe. After a pause he heard Tom coming down the stairs, jingling the church keys ; and bringing his eye to the top of the pew again, saw him go slowly out, and lock the door.

Mr. Pecksniff durst not issue from his place of concealment ; for through the windows of the church, he saw Tom passing on among the graves, and sometimes stopping at a stone, and leaning there, as if he were a mourner who had lost a friend. Even when he had left the churchyard, Mr. Pecksniff still remained shut up : not being at all secure but that in his restless state of mind Tom might come wandering back. At length he issued forth, and walked with a pleasant countenance into the vestry ; where he knew there was a window near the ground, by which he could release himself by merely stepping out.

He was in a curious frame of mind, Mr. Pecksniff : being in no hurry to go, but rather inclining to a dilatory trifling with the time, which

prompted him to open the vestry cupboard, and look at himself in the parson's little glass that hung within the door. Seeing that his hair was rumpled, he took the liberty of borrowing the canonical brush and arranging it. He also took the liberty of opening another cupboard ; but he shut it up again quickly, being rather startled by the sight of a black and a white surplice dangling against the wall ; which had very much the appearance of two curates who had committed suicide by hanging themselves. Remembering that he had seen in the first cupboard a port-wine bottle and some biscuits, he peeped into it again, and helped himself with much deliberation : cogitating all the time though, in a very deep and weighty manner, as if his thoughts were otherwise employed.

He soon made up his mind, if it had ever been in doubt ; and putting back the bottle and biscuits, opened the casement. He got out into the churchyard without any difficulty ; shut the window after him ; and walked straight home.

"Is Mr. Pinch in-doors ?" asked Mr. Pecksniff of his serving-maid.

"Just come in, Sir."

"Just come in, eh ?" repeated Mr. Pecksniff, cheerfully. "And gone up-stairs, I suppose ?"

"Yes, Sir. Gone up-stairs. Shall I call him, Sir ?"

"No," said Mr. Pecksniff, "no. You needn't call him, Jane. Thank you, Jane. How are your relations, Jane ?"

"Pretty well, I thank you, Sir."

"I am glad to hear it. Let them know I asked about them, Jane. Is Mr. Chuzzlewit in the way, Jane ?"

"Yes, Sir. He's in the parlour, reading."

"He's in the parlour, reading, is he, Jane ?" said Mr. Pecksniff. "Very well. Then I think I'll go and see him, Jane."

Never had Mr. Pecksniff been beheld in a more pleasant humour !

But when he walked into the parlour where the old man was engaged as Jane had said ; with pen and ink and paper on a table close at hand (for Mr. Pecksniff was always very particular to have him well supplied with writing materials) ; he became less cheerful. He was not angry, he was not vindictive, he was not cross, he was not moody, but he was grieved : he was sorely grieved. As he sat down by the old man's side, two tears : not tears like those with which recording angels blot their entries out, but drops so precious that they use them for their ink : stole down his meritorious cheeks.

"What is the matter ?" asked old Martin. "Pecksniff, what ails you, man ?"

"I am sorry to interrupt you, my dear Sir, and I am still more sorry for the cause. My good, my worthy friend, I am deceived."

"You are deceived !"

"Ah !" cried Mr. Pecksniff, in an agony, "deceived in the tenderest point. Cruelly deceived in that quarter, Sir, in which I placed the most unbounded confidence. Deceived, Mr. Chuzzlewit, by Thomas Pinch."

"Oh ! bad, bad, bad !" said Martin, laying down his book. "Very bad. I hope not. Are you certain ?"

"Certain, my good Sir! My eyes and ears are witnesses. I wouldn't have believed it otherwise. I wouldn't have believed it, Mr. Chuzzlewit, if a Fiery Serpent had proclaimed it from the top of Salisbury Cathedral. I would have said," cried Mr. Pecksniff, "that the Serpent lied. Such was my faith in Thomas Pinch, that I would have cast the falsehood back into the Serpent's teeth, and would have taken Thomas to my heart. But I am not a Serpent, Sir, myself, I grieve to say, and no excuse or hope is left me."

Martin was greatly disturbed to see him so much agitated, and to hear such unexpected news. He begged him to compose himself, and asked upon what subject Mr. Pinch's treachery had been developed.

"That is almost the worst of all, Sir," Mr. Pecksniff answered. "On a subject nearly concerning *you*. Oh! is it not enough," said Mr. Pecksniff, looking upward, "that these blows must fall on me, but must they also hit my friends!"

"You alarm me," cried the old man, changing colour. "I am not so strong as I was. You terrify me, Pecksniff!"

"Cheer up, my noble Sir," said Mr. Pecksniff, taking courage, "and we will do what is required of us. You shall know all, Sir, and shall be righted. But first excuse me, Sir, ex—cuse me. I have a duty to discharge, which I owe to society."

He rang the bell, and Jane appeared.

"Send Mr. Pinch here, if you please, Jane!"

Tom came. Constrained and altered in his manner, downcast and dejected, visibly confused; not liking to look Pecksniff in the face.

The honest man bestowed a glance on Mr. Chuzzlewit, as who should say "You see!" and addressed himself to Tom in these terms:

"Mr. Pinch, I have left the vestry-window unfastened. Will you do me the favour to go and secure it; then bring the keys of the sacred edifice to me!"

"The vestry-window, Sir!" cried Tom.

"You understand me Mr. Pinch, I think" returned his patron. "Yes Mr. Pinch, the vestry-window. I grieve to say that sleeping in the church after a fatiguing ramble, I overheard just now some fragments" he emphasised that word "of a dialogue between two parties; and one of them locking the church when he went out, I was obliged to leave it myself by the vestry-window. Do me the favour to secure that vestry-window, Mr. Pinch, and then come back to me."

No physiognomist that ever dwelt on earth could have construed Tom's face when he heard these words. Wonder was in it, and a mild look of reproach, but certainly no fear or guilt, although a host of strong emotions struggled to display themselves. He bowed, and without saying one word, good or bad, withdrew.

"Pecksniff," cried Martin, in a tremble, "what does all this mean? You are not going to do anything in haste, you may regret!"

"No, my good Sir," said Mr. Pecksniff, firmly, "No. But I have a duty to discharge which I owe to society; and it shall be discharged, my friend, at any cost!"

Oh late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart duty, always

owed, and seldom paid in any other coin than punishment and wrath, when will mankind begin to know thee! When will men acknowledge thee in thy neglected cradle, and thy stunted youth, and not begin their recognition in thy sinful manhood and thy desolate old age! Oh ermined Judge whose duty to society is now to doom the ragged criminal to punishment and death, hadst thou never, Man, a duty to discharge in barring up the hundred open gates that wooed him to the felon's dock, and throwing but ajar the portals to a decent life! Oh prelate, prelate, whose duty to society it is to mourn in melancholy phrase the sad degeneracy of these bad times in which thy lot of honours has been cast, did nothing go before thy elevation to the lofty seat, from which thou dealest out thy homilies to other tarriers for dead men's shoes, whose duty to society has not begun! Oh magistrate, so rare a country gentleman and brave a squire, had you no duty to society, before the ricks were blazing and the mob were mad; or did it spring up armed and booted from the earth, a corps of yeomanry, full-grown!

Mr. Pecksniff's duty to society could not be paid till Tom came back. The interval which preceded the return of that young man, he occupied in a close conference with his friend; so that when Tom did arrive, he found the two quite ready to receive him. Mary was in her own room above, whither Mr. Pecksniff, always considerate, had besought old Martin to entreat her to remain some half-hour longer, that her feelings might be spared.

When Tom came back, he found old Martin sitting by the window, and Mr. Pecksniff in an imposing attitude at the table. On one side of him was his pocket-handkerchief; and on the other, a little heap (a very little heap) of gold and silver, and odd pence. Tom saw, at a glance, that it was his own salary for the current quarter.

"Have you fastened the vestry-window, Mr. Pinch?" said Pecksniff.

"Yes Sir."

"Thank you. Put down the keys if you please, Mr. Pinch."

Tom placed them on the table. He held the bunch by the key of the organ-loft (though it was one of the smallest) and looked hard at it as he laid it down. It had been an old, old friend of Tom's; a kind companion to him, many and many a day.

"Mr. Pinch," said Pecksniff, shaking his head: "Oh Mr. Pinch! I wonder you can look me in the face!"

Tom did it though; and notwithstanding that he has been described as stooping generally, he stood as upright then as man could stand.

"Mr. Pinch," said Pecksniff, taking up his handkerchief, as if he felt that he should want it soon, "I will not dwell upon the past. I will spare you, and I will spare myself, that pain at least."

Tom's was not a very bright eye, but it was a very expressive one when he looked at Mr. Pecksniff, and said:

"Thank you Sir. I am very glad you will not refer to the past."

"The present is enough," said Mr. Pecksniff, dropping a penny, "and the sooner *that* is past, the better. Mr. Pinch, I will not dismiss you without a explanation. Even such a course would be quite justifiable under the circumstances; but it might wear an appearance of

hurry, and I will not do it ; for I am," said Mr. Pecksniff, knocking down another penny, "perfectly self-possessed. Therefore I will say to you, what I have already said to Mr. Chuzzlewit."

Tom glanced at the old gentleman, who nodded now and then as approving of Mr. Pecksniff's sentences and sentiments, but interposed between them in no other way.

"From fragments of a conversation which I overheard in the church, just now, Mr. Pinch," said Pecksniff, "between yourself and Miss Graham—I say fragments, because I was slumbering at a considerable distance from you, when I was roused by your voices—and from what I saw, I ascertained (I would have given a great deal not to have ascertained, Mr. Pinch) that you, forgetful of all ties of duty and of honour Sir ; regardless of the sacred laws of hospitality, to which you were pledged as an inmate of this house ; have presumed to address Miss Graham with un-retained professions of attachment and proposals of love."

Tom looked at him steadily.

"Do you deny it Sir ?" asked Mr. Pecksniff, dropping one pound two and fourpence, and making a great business of picking it up again.

"No Sir," replied Tom. "I do not."

"You do not," said Mr. Pecksniff, glancing at the old gentleman. "Oblige me by counting this money, Mr. Pinch, and putting your name to this receipt. You do not?"

No, Tom did not. He scorned to deny it. He saw that Mr. Pecksniff having overheard his own disgrace, cared not a jot for sinking lower yet in his contempt. He saw that he had devised this fiction as the readiest means of getting rid of him at once, but that it must end in that any way. He saw that Mr. Pecksniff reckoned on his not denying it, because his doing so and explaining, would incense the old man more than ever against Martin, and against Mary : while Pecksniff himself would only have been mistaken in his "fragments." Deny it ! No.

"You find the amount correct, do you Mr. Pinch ?" said Pecksniff.

"Quite correct Sir," answered Tom.

"A person is waiting in the kitchen," said Mr. Pecksniff, "to carry your luggage wherever you please. We part, Mr. Pinch, at once, and are strangers from this time."

Something without a name ; compassion, sorrow, old tenderness, mistaken gratitude, habit : none of these, and yet all of them ; smote upon Tom's gentle heart, at parting. There was no such soul as Pecksniff's in that carcase ; and yet, though his speaking out had not involved the compromise of one he loved, he could not have denounced the very shape and figure of the man. Not even then.

"I will not say," cried Mr. Pecksniff, shedding tears, "what a blow this is. I will not say how much it tries me ; how it works upon my nature ; how it grates upon my feelings. I do not care for that. I can endure as well as another man. But what I have to hope, and what you have to hope, Mr. Pinch (otherwise a great responsibility rests upon you), is, that this deception may not alter my ideas of humanity ;

that it may not impair my freshness, or contract, if I may use the expression, my Pinions. I hope it will not ; I don't think it will. It may be a comfort to you, if not now, at some future time, to know, that I shall endeavour not to think the worse of my fellow-creatures in general, for what has passed between us. Farewell !”

Tom had meant to spare him one little puncturation with a lancet, which he had it in his power to administer, but he changed his mind on hearing this, and said :

“ I think you left something in the church, Sir.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Pinch,” said Pecksniff. “ I am not aware that I did.”

“ This is your double eye-glass, I believe ?” said Tom.

“ Oh !” cried Pecksniff, with some degree of confusion. “ I am obliged to you. Put it down if you please.”

“ I found it,” said Tom, slowly—“ when I went to bolt the vestry-window—in the Pew.”

So he had. Mr. Pecksniff had taken it off when he was bobbing up and down, lest it should strike against the pannelling : and had forgotten it. Going back to the church with his mind full of having been watched, and wondering very much from what part, Tom's attention was caught by the door of the state pew standing open. Looking into it he found the glass. And thus he knew, and by returning it gave Mr. Pecksniff the information that he knew, where the listener had been ; and that instead of overhearing fragments of the conversation, he must have rejoiced in every word of it.

“ I am glad he's gone,” said Martin, drawing a long breath when Tom had left the room.

“ It is a relief,” assented Mr. Pecksniff. “ It is a great relief. But having discharged : I hope with tolerable firmness : the duty which I owed to society, I will now, my dear Sir, if you will give me leave, retire to shed a few tears in the back garden, as an humble individual.”

Tom went upstairs ; cleared his shelf of books : packed them up with his music and an old fiddle in his trunk ; got out his clothes (they were not so many that they made his head ache) ; put them on the top of his books ; and went into the workroom for his case of instruments. There was a ragged stool there, with the horsehair all sticking out of the top like a wig : a very Beast of a stool in itself : on which he had taken up his daily seat, year after year, during the whole period of his service. They had grown older and shabbier in company. Pupils had served their time ; seasons had come and gone ; Tom and the worn-out stool had held together through it all. That part of the room was traditionally called “ Tom's Corner.” It had been assigned to him at first because of its being situated in a strong draught, and a great way from the fire ; and he had occupied it ever since. There were portraits of him on the wall, with all his weak points monstrously portrayed. Diabolical sentiments, foreign to his character, were represented as issuing from his mouth in fat balloons. Every pupil had added something, even unto fancy portraits of his father with one eye, and of his mother with a disproportionate nose, and especially of his sister : who

always being presented as extremely beautiful, made full amends to Tom for any other joke. Under less uncommon circumstances, it would have cut Tom to the heart to leave these things, and think that he saw them for the last time ; but it didn't now. There was no Pecksniff ; there never had been a Pecksniff ; and all his other griefs were swallowed up in that.

So when he returned into the bedroom, and having fastened up his box and a carpet-bag, had put on his walking gaiters, and his great-coat, and his hat, and taken his stick in his hand, he looked round it for the last time. Early on summer mornings, and by the light of private candle-ends on winter nights, he had read himself half blind in this same room. He had tried in this same room to learn the fiddle under the bedclothes, but yielding to objections from the other pupils, had reluctantly abandoned the design. At any other time he would have parted from it with a pang, thinking of all he had learned there, of the many hours he had passed there : for the love of his very dreams. But there was no Pecksniff ; there never had been a Pecksniff ; and the unreality of Pecksniff extended itself to the chamber, in which, sitting on one particular bed, the thing supposed to be that Great Abstraction had often preached morality with such effect, that Tom had felt a moisture in his eyes, while hanging breathless on the words.

The man engaged to bear his box : Tom knew him well. A Dragon man : came stamping up the stairs, and made a roughish bow to Tom (to whom in common times he would have nodded with a grin) as though he were aware of what had happened, and wished him to perceive it made no difference in *him*. It was clumsily done ; he was a mere waterer of horses ; but Tom liked the man for it, and felt it more than going away.

Tom would have helped him with the box, but he made no more of it, though it was a heavy one, than an elephant would have made of a castle : just swinging it on his back and bowling down stairs as if, being naturally a heavy sort of fellow, he could carry a box infinitely better than he could go alone. Tom took the carpet-bag, and went down stairs along with him. At the outer door stood Jane, crying with all her might ; and on the steps was Mrs. Lupin, sobbing bitterly, and putting out her hand for Tom to shake.

"You're coming to the Dragon, Mr. Pinch ?"

"No," said Tom, "no. I shall walk to Salisbury to-night. I couldn't stay here. For goodness' sake, don't make me so unhappy, Mrs. Lupin."

"But you'll come to the Dragon, Mr. Pinch. If it's only for to-night. To see me, you know : not as a traveller."

"God bless my soul !" said Tom, wiping his eyes. "The kindness of people is enough to break one's heart ! I mean to go to Salisbury to-night, my dear good creature. If you'll take care of my box for me, till I write for it, I shall consider it the greatest kindness you can do me."

"I wish," cried Mrs. Lupin, "there were twenty boxes, Mr. Pinch, that I might have 'em all."

"Thank'ee" said Tom. "It's like you. Good bye. Good bye."

There were several people, young and old, standing about the door,

some of whom cried with Mrs. Lupin ; while others tried to keep up a stout heart as Tom did ; and others were absorbed in admiration of Mr. Pecksniff—a man who could build a church, as one may say, by squinting at a sheet of paper ; and others were divided between that feeling, and sympathy with Tom. Mr. Pecksniff had appeared on the top of the steps, simultaneously with his old pupil, and while Tom was talking with Mrs. Lupin kept his hand stretched out, as though he said “Go forth !” When Tom went forth, and had turned the corner, Mr. Pecksniff shook his head, shut his eyes, and heaving a deep sigh, likewise shut the door. On which, the best of Tom’s supporters said he must have done some dreadful deed, or such a man as Mr. Pecksniff never could have felt like that. If it had been a common quarrel (they observed) he would have said something, but when he did n’t, Mr. Pinch must have shocked him dreadfully.

Tom was out of hearing of their shrewd opinions, and plodded on as steadily as he could go, until he came within sight of the turnpike where the tollman’s family had cried out “Mr. Pinch !” that frosty morning, when he went to meet young Martin. He had got through the village, and this tollbar was his last trial ; but when the infant toll-takers came screeching out, he had half a mind to run for it, and make a bolt across the country.

“Why deary Mr. Pinch ! oh deary Sir !” exclaimed the tollman’s wife. “What an unlikely time for you to be a going this way with a bag !”

“I’m going to Salisbury,” said Tom.

“Why, goodness, where’s the gig then ?” cried the tollman’s wife, looking down the road, as if she thought Tom might have been upset without observing it.

“I have n’t got it,” said Tom. “I—” he couldn’t evade it ; he felt she would have him in the next question, if he got over this one. “I have left Mr. Pecksniff.”

The tollman—a crusty customer, always smoking solitary pipes in a Windsor chair, inside, set artfully between two little windows that looked up and down the road, so that when he saw anything coming up, he might hug himself on having toll to take, and when he saw it going down, might hug himself on having taken it—the tollman was out in an instant.

“Left Mr. Pecksniff !” cried the tollman.

“Yes,” said Tom, “left him.”

The tollman looked at his wife, uncertain whether to ask her if she had anything to suggest, or to order her to mind the children. Astonishment making him surly, he preferred the latter, and sent her into the toll-house, with a flea in her ear.

“You left Mr. Pecksniff !” cried the tollman, folding his arms, and spreading his legs. “I should as soon have thought of his head leaving him.”

“Ay !” said Tom, “so should I, yesterday. Good night !”

If a heavy drove of oxen had n’t come by, immediately, the tollman would have gone down to the village straight to inquire into it. As things turned out, he smoked another pipe, and took his wife into his

confidence. But their united sagacity could make nothing of it, and they went to bed—metaphorically—in the dark. But several times that night, when a waggon or other vehicle came through, and the driver asked the tollkeeper "What news?" he looked at the man by the light of his lantern, to assure himself that he had an interest in the subject, and then said, wrapping his watch-coat round his legs :

"You've heerd of Mr. Pecksniff down yonder?"

"Ah! sure-ly!"

"And of his young man Mr. Pinch p'raps?"

"Ah!"

"They've parted."

After every one of these disclosures, the tollman plunged into his house again, and was seen no more, while the other side went on, in great amazement.

But this was long after Tom was abed, and Tom was now with his face towards Salisbury, doing his best to get there. The evening was beautiful at first, but it became cloudy and dull at sunset, and the rain fell heavily soon afterwards. For ten long miles he plodded on, wet through, until at last the lights appeared, and he came into the welcome precincts of the city.

He went to the inn where he had waited for Martin, and briefly answering their enquiries after Mr. Pecksniff, ordered a bed. He had no heart for tea or supper, meat or drink of any kind, but sat by himself before an empty table in the public-room while the bed was getting ready: revolving in his mind all that had happened that eventful day, and wondering what he could or should do for the future. It was a great relief when the chambermaid came in, and said the bed was ready.

It was a low four-poster shelving downward in the centre like a trough, and the room was crowded with impracticable tables and exploded chests of drawers, full of damp linen. A graphic representation in oil of a remarkably fat ox hung over the fire-place, and the portrait of some former landlord (who might have been the ox's brother, he was so like him) stared roundly in, at the foot of the bed. A variety of queer smells were partially quenched in the prevailing scent of very old lavender; and the window had not been opened for such a long space of time, that it pleaded immemorial usage, and wouldn't come open now.

These were trifles in themselves, but they added to the strangeness of the place, and did not induce Tom to forget his new position. Pecksniff had gone out of the world—had never been in it—and it was as much as Tom could do to say his prayers without him. But he felt happier afterwards, and went to sleep, and dreamed about him as he Never Was.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TREATS OF TODGERS'S AGAIN ; AND OF ANOTHER BLIGHTED PLANT
BESIDES THE PLANTS UPON THE LEADS.

EARLY on the day next after that on which she bade adieu to the halls of her youth and the scenes of her childhood, Miss Pecksniff, arriving safely at the coach-office in London, was there received, and conducted to her peaceful home beneath the shadow of the Monument, by Mrs. Todgers. M. Todgers looked a little worn by cares of gravity and other such sollicitudes arising out of her establishment, but displayed her usual earnestness and warmth of manner.

"And how, my sweet Miss Pecksniff," said she, "how is your princely pa?"

Miss Pecksniff signified (in confidence) that he contemplated the introduction of a princely ma; and repeated the sentiment that she wasn't blind, and wasn't quite a fool, and wouldn't bear it.

Mrs. Todgers was more shocked by the intelligence than any one could have expected. She was quite bitter. She said there was no truth in man, and that the warmer he expressed himself, as a general principle, the falser and more treacherous he was. She foresaw with astonishing clearness that the object of Mr. Pecksniff's attachment was designing, worthless, and wicked; and receiving from Charity the fullest confirmation of these views, protested with tears in her eyes that she loved Miss Pecksniff like a sister, and felt her injuries as if they were her own.

"Your real darling sister, I have not seen more than once since her marriage," said Mrs. Todgers, "and then I thought her looking poorly. My sweet Miss Pecksniff, I always thought that you was to be the lady."

"Oh dear no!" cried Cherry, shaking her head. "Oh no, Mrs. Todgers. Thank you. No! not for any consideration he could offer."

"I dare say you are right," said Mrs. Todgers, with a sigh. "I feared it all along. But the misery we have had from that match, here among ourselves, in this house, my dear Miss Pecksniff, nobody would believe."

"Lor, Mrs. Todgers!"

"Awful, awful!" repeated Mrs. Todgers, with strong emphasis.

"You recollect our youngest gentleman, my dear?"

"Of course I do," said Cherry.

"You might have observed," said Mrs. Todgers, "how he used to watch your sister; and that a kind of stony dumbness came over him whenever she was in company?"

"I am sure I never saw anything of the sort," said Cherry, in a peevish manner. "What nonsense, Mrs. Todgers!"

"My dear," returned that lady in a hollow voice, "I have seen him, again and again, sitting over his pie at dinner, with his spoon a perfect fixture in his mouth, looking at your sister. I have seen him standing

in a corner of our drawing-room, gazing at her, in such a lonely, melancholy state, that he was more like a Pump than a man, and might have drawn tears."

"I never saw it!" cried Cherry; "that's all I can say."

"But when the marriage took place," said Mrs. Todgers, proceeding with her subject, "when it was in the paper, and was read out here at breakfast, I thought he had taken leave of his senses, I did indeed. The violence of that young man, my dear Miss Pecksniff; the frightful opinions he expressed upon the subject of self-destruction; the extraordinary actions he performed with his tea; the clenching way in which he bit his bread and butter; the manner in which he taunted Mr. Jinkins; all combined to form a picture never to be forgotten."

"It's a pity he did n't destroy himself, I think," observed Miss Pecksniff.

"Himself!" said Mrs. Todgers, "it took another turn at night. He was for destroying other people then. There was a little chaffing going on—I hope you don't consider that a low expression, Miss Pecksniff; it is always in our gentlemen's mouths—a little chaffing going on, my dear, among 'em, all in good nature, when suddenly he rose up, foaming with his fury, and but for being held by three, would have had Mr. Jinkins's life with a boot-jack!"

Miss Pecksniff's face expressed supreme indifference.

"And now," said Mrs. Todgers, "now he is the meekest of men. You can almost bring the tears into his eyes by looking at him. He sits with me the whole day long on Sundays, talking in such a dismal way that I find it next to impossible to keep my spirits up equal to the accommodation of the boarders. His only comfort is in female society. He takes me half-price to the play, to an extent which I sometimes fear is beyond his means; and I see the tears a standing in his eyes during the whole performance: particularly if it is anything of a comic nature. The turn I experienced only yesterday," said Mrs. Todgers, putting her hand to her side, "when the housemaid threw his bedside carpet out of the window of his room, while I was sitting here, no one can imagine. I thought it was him, and that he had done it at last!"

The contempt with which Miss Charity received this pathetic account of the state to which the youngest gentleman in company was reduced, did not say much for her power of sympathising with that unfortunate character. She treated it with great levity, and went on to inform herself, then and afterwards, whether any other changes had occurred in the commercial boarding-house.

Mr. Bailey was gone, and had been succeeded (such is the decay of human greatness!) by an old woman whose name was reported to be Tamaroo: which seemed an impossibility. Indeed it appeared in the fulness of time that the jocular boarders had appropriated the word from an English ballad, in which it is supposed to express the bold and fiery nature of a certain hackney-coachman; and that it was bestowed upon Mr. Bailey's successor by reason of her having nothing fiery about her, except an occasional attack of that fire which is called St. Anthony's. This ancient female had been engaged, in fulfilment of a vow, registered by Mrs. Todgers, that no more boys should darken the commercial doors;

and she was chiefly remarkable for a total absence of all comprehension upon every subject whatever. She was a perfect Tomb for messages and small parcels ; and when despatched to the Post-office with letters, had been frequently seen endeavouring to insinuate them into casual chinks in private doors, under the delusion that any door with a hole in it would answer the purpose. She was a very little old woman, and always wore a very coarse apron with a bib before and a loop behind, together with bandages on her wrists, which appeared to be afflicted with an everlasting sprain. She was on all occasions chary of opening the street-door, and ardent to shut it again ; and she waited at table in a bonnet.

This was the only great change over and above the change which had fallen on the youngest gentleman. As for him, he more than corroborated the account of Mrs. Todgers : possessing greater sensibility than even she had given him credit for. He entertained some terrible notions of Destiny, among other matters, and talked much about people's " Missions : " upon which he seemed to have some private information not generally attainable, as he knew it had been poor Merry's mission to crush him in the bud. He was very frail, and tearful ; for being aware that a shepherd's mission was to pipe to his flocks, and that a boatswain's mission was to pipe all hands, and that one man's mission was to be a paid piper, and another man's mission was to pay the piper, so he had got it into his head that his own peculiar mission was to pipe his eye. Which he did perpetually.

He often informed Mrs. Todgers that the sun had set upon him ; that the billows had rolled over him ; that the Car of Juggernaut had crushed him ; and also that the deadly Upas tree of Java had blighted him. His name was Moddle.

Towards this most unhappy Moddle, Miss Pecksniff conducted herself at first with distant haughtiness, being in no humour to be entertained with dirges in honour of her married sister. The poor young gentleman was additionally crushed by this, and remonstrated with Mrs. Todgers on the subject.

" Even she turns from me, Mrs. Todgers," said Moddle.

" Then why don't you try and be a little bit more cheerful Sir ? " retorted Mrs. Todgers.

" Cheerful Mrs. Todgers ! Cheerful ! " cried the youngest gentleman : " when she reminds me of days for ever fled, Mrs. Todgers ! "

" Then you had better avoid her for a short time if she does," said Mrs. Todgers, " and come to know her again, by degrees. That's my advice. "

" But I can't avoid her," replied Moddle. " I haven't strength of mind to do it. Oh Mrs. Todgers, if you knew what a comfort her nose is to me ! "

" Her nose, Sir ! " Mrs. Todgers cried.

" Her profile in general," said the youngest gentleman, " but particularly her nose. It's so like ; " here he yielded to a burst of grief ; " It's so like hers who is Another's, Mrs. Todgers ! "

The observant matron did not fail to report this conversation to Charity, who laughed at the time, but treated Mr. Moddle that very evening with increased consideration, and presented her side-face to him as much as possible. Mr. Moddle was not less sentimental than usual ;

was rather more so, if anything ; but he sat and stared at her with glistening eyes, and seemed grateful.

"Well, Sir!" said the lady of the Boarding-House next day, "you held up your head last night. You're coming round, I think."

"Only because she's so like her who is Another's, Mrs. Todgers," rejoined the youth. "When she talks, and when she smiles, I think I'm looking on HER brow again, Mrs. Todgers."

This was likewise carried to Charity, who talked and smiled next evening in her most engaging manner, and rallying Mr. Moddle on the lowness of his spirits, challenged him to play a rubber at cribbage. Mr. Moddle taking up the gauntlet, they played several rubbers for sixpences, and Charity won them all. This may have been partially attributable to the gallantry of the youngest gentleman, but it was certainly referable to the state of his feelings also ; for his eyes being frequently dimmed by tears, he thought that aces were tens, and knaves queens, which at times occasioned some confusion in his play.

On the seventh night of cribbage, when Mrs. Todgers, sitting by, proposed that instead of gambling they should play for "love," Mr. Moddle was seen to change colour. On the fourteenth night, he kissed Miss Pecksniff's snuffers, in the passage, when she went up stairs to bed : meaning to have kissed her hand, but missing it.

In short, Mr. Moddle began to be impressed with the idea that Miss Pecksniff's mission was to comfort him ; and Miss Pecksniff began to speculate on the probability of its being her mission to become ultimately Mrs. Moddle. He was a young gentleman (Miss Pecksniff was not a very young lady) with rising prospects, and "almost" enough to live on. Really it looked very well.

Besides—besides—he had been regarded as devoted to Merry. Merry had joked about him, and had once spoken of it to her sister as a conquest. He was better looking, better shaped, better spoken, better tempered, better mannered than Jonas. He was easy to manage, could be made to consult the humours of his Betrothed, and could be shown off like a lamb when Jonas was a bear. There was the rub !

In the meantime the cribbage went on, and Mrs. Todgers went off ; for the youngest gentleman, dropping her society, began to take Miss Pecksniff to the play. He also began, as Mrs. Todgers said, to slip home "in his dinner-times," and to get away from "the office" at unholy seasons ; and twice, as he informed Mrs. Todgers himself, he received anonymous letters, inclosing cards from Furniture Warehouses—clearly the act of that ungentlemanly ruffian Jenkins : only he had n't evidence enough to call him out upon. All of which, so Mrs. Todgers told Miss Pecksniff, spoke as plain English as the shining sun.

"My dear Miss Pecksniff, you may depend upon it," said Mrs. Todgers, "that he is burning to propose."

"My goodness me, why don't he then !" cried Cherry.

"Men are so much more timid than we think 'em, my dear," returned Mrs. Todgers. "They baulk themselves continually. I saw the words on Todgers's lips for months and months and months, before he said 'em.'"

Miss Pecksniff submitted that Todgers might not have been a fair specimen.

"Oh yes he was. Oh bless you, yes my dear. I was very particular in those days, I assure you," said Mrs. Todgers, bridling. "No, no. You give Mr. Moddle a little encouragement, Miss Pecksniff, if you wish him to speak; and he'll speak fast enough, depend upon it."

"I am sure I don't know what encouragement he would have, Mrs. Todgers," returned Charity. "He walks with me, and plays cards with me, and he comes and sits alone with me."

"Quite right," said Mrs. Todgers. "That's indispensable, my dear."

"And he sits very close to me."

"Also quite correct," said Mrs. Todgers.

"And he looks at me."

"To be sure he does," said Mrs. Todgers.

"And he has his arm upon the back of the chair or sofa, or whatever it is—behind me, you know."

"I should think so," said Mrs. Todgers.

"And then he begins to cry!"

Mrs. Todgers admitted that he might do better than that; and might undoubtedly profit by the recollection of the great Lord Nelson's signal at the battle of Trafalgar. Still, she said, he would come round, or, not to mince the matter, would be brought round, if Miss Pecksniff took up a decided position, and plainly showed him that it must be done.

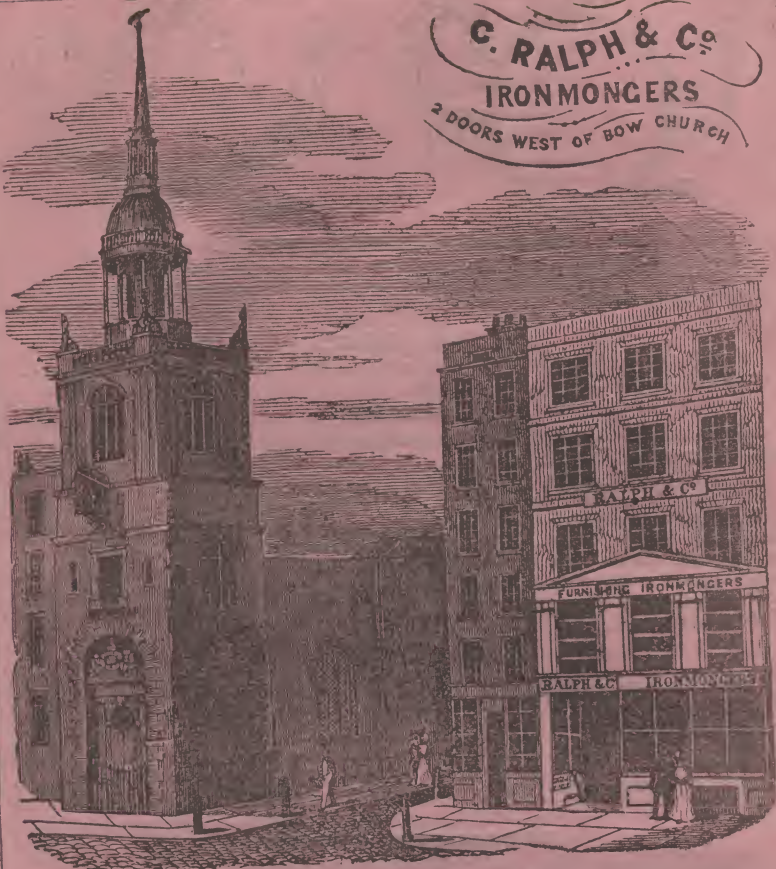
Determining to regulate her conduct by this opinion, the young lady received Mr. Moddle, on the earliest subsequent occasion, with an air of constraint; and gradually leading him to inquire, in a dejected manner, why she was so changed, confessed to him that she felt it necessary for their mutual peace and happiness to take a decided step. They had been much together lately, she observed, much together, and had tasted the sweets of a genuine reciprocity of sentiment. She never could forget him, nor could she ever cease to think of him with feelings of the liveliest friendship; but people had begun to talk, the thing had been observed; and it was necessary that they should be nothing more to each other, than any gentleman and lady in society usually are. She was glad she had had the resolution to say thus much before her feelings had been tried too far; they had been greatly tried, she would admit; but though she was weak and silly, she would soon get the better of it, she hoped.

Moddle, who had by this time become in the last degree maudlin, and who wept abundantly, inferred from the foregoing avowal, that it was his mission to communicate to others the blight which had fallen on himself; and that, being a kind of unintentional Vampire, he had had Miss Pecksniff assigned to him by the Fates, as Victim Number One. Miss Pecksniff controverting this opinion as sinful, Moddle was goaded on to ask whether she could be contented with a blighted heart; and it appearing on further examination that she could be, plighted his dismal troth, which was accepted and returned.

He bore his good fortune with the utmost moderation. Instead of being triumphant, he shed more tears than he had ever been known to shed before: and, sobbing, said:

"Oh, what a day this has been! I can't go back to the office this afternoon. Oh, what a trying day this has been, Good Gracious!"

C. RALPH & Co.
IRONMONGERS
 2 DOORS WEST OF BOW CHURCH



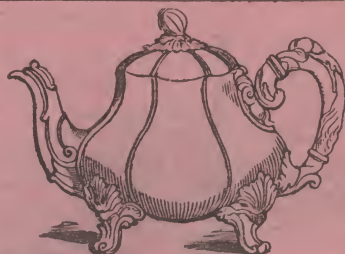
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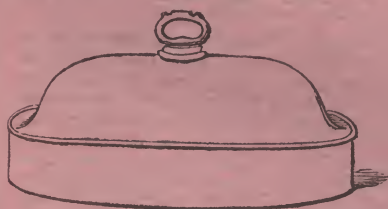
	Fiddle pattern.	Thread patn.	King's patn.	
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
Table Spoons or Forks, per doz.	13 to 22 0	24 0	30 0	Fish Knife Ivory Handle 8 6
Dessert do.	10 18 0	20 0	25 0	Butter Knife..... 3 6
Tea do.	4 10 0	12 0	14 0	Asparagus Tongs 10 6
Mustard, Salt, or Egg	5 9 0	10 0	12 0	Knife Rests, per pair..... 3 0
Gravy..... each	4 0	5 0		Toast Racks, a variety from. 8 6
Soup Ladle	8 0	8 0	11 6	Teapots, an Elegant Assortment
Sauce do.	1 6	2 0	2 6	from 25 0
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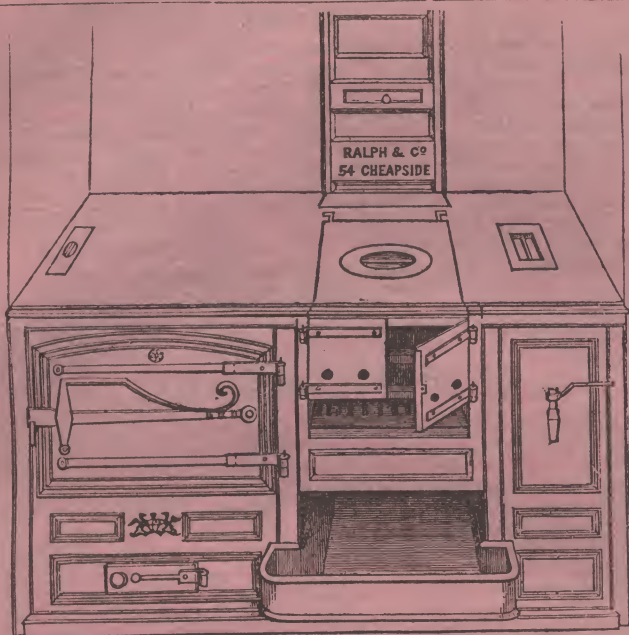
No. 2.

DISH COVERS.

No. 5.

	Inches ..	9	10	11	12	14	16	18
No.2.—Patent Imperial, Tops raised	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
in one piece	2 0	2 3	2 6	2 9	3 6	4 0		
3.—Do. do. stronger quality	2 6	3 0	3 6	4 6	5 6	6 9	9 3	
4.—Do. strongest and best made	3 0	4 0	4 6	5 6	7 0	9 0	12 0	
5.—Silver patn. one entire piece		4 6	5 6	6 0	7 6	9 6	12 6	
6.—Do. New pattern, Fluted do.		6 6	7 6	8 6	10 6	12 6	14 6	

To fit an Opening..... 3ft.6in., £8; 4ft., £10; 4ft.6in., £12.

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Inches wide ..	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
Elliptic, or Romford s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
for Bed rooms.	6 0	6 8	7 4	8 0	8 8	9 4	10 0	10 8	11 4	12 0
Register Stoves ..				18 0	19 6	21 0	22 6	24 0	25 6	27 0

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Bright do. with Bronzed or Ormolu Ornaments and 2 sets of Bars, from 57. 5s.

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Strong Wrought Fire-Irons for	s. d.	s. d.	Polished Steel Bright pans for	s. d.	s. d.
Kitchens	4 6	to 8 6	Dining Rooms, from.....		7 6
Wrought Iron for Servants' Bed			Do. Cut Heads		10 6
rooms	2 6		Highly Polished and Richly Cut		
Polished Steel do. Best Bed rooms	4 6		Heads, from	20 0	to 42 0

The variety of designs and qualities of **Fenders** is so great, that it is difficult to give a list of Prices. The following, however, may be taken as a guide, and will be found as low as that of any house:—

	3ft.	3ft.3in.	3ft.6in.	3ft.9in.	4ft.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Japanned green, with Brass tops, for Bed-rooms	3 0		3 6		
Black leaded for Libraries or Dining Rooms	6 0	6 6	7 0	7 6	8 6
Bronzed, with Burnished Steel Top			10 6	11 6	12 6
Bold Bronzed Centre, Steel Bar and Standards complete.....					24 0
Steel Ends and Bar and handsome Bronzed Centre. A variety.....					42 0
Iron Kitchen, with Sliding Bar	4 6	5 0	6 0	6 6	7 6

BATHS.**Hip**, Japanned Oak. Strong 21s. and 26s.**Shower**, with Brass Force Pump, Brass Pillar Valve, and Conducting Pipes, Japanned Oak, Rings and Curtains complete, 60s. to 95s.**Albert** New pattern the best that can be made 105s. C**Portable Shower Bath**, Brass Valve, with Rings and Curtains 16s. to 21s.**Universal Bath**, on Castors, with Copper Furnace and Pipe attached by which the water can be heated in 35 minutes, Japanned Marble from 7l. These can also be fitted with a Shower Bath and Pump.**Open Taper**.—2ft. 2in., 17s. 6d.; 2ft. 10in., 21s.; 3ft. 4in., 25s.; 3ft. 7in., 32s.; 4ft. 2in., 38s.; 4ft. 9in., 50s.**Sponge Bath** from 14s.**Foot Bath**. 5s. 6d.—7s. 6d. Tub pattern hooped, 10s.**CURTAIN POLES.**Very strong, all Brass Lackered:—1s. 4d. 1s. 6d. 1s. 9d. 2s. per foot.
1½ 1¾ 2 2½ inches diameter.**TABLE CUTLERY.**

	Table.		Table.		Dessert.		Dessert.		Carver
	Knives	Forks	Knives	Forks	Knives	Forks	Knives	Forks	
	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Doz.	4½ Pair
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
3½ Inch Octagon, Ivory Handles to balance	12 6	6 3	10 6	5 3	4 6				
3½ " Waterloo, shoulders do.	16 0	8 3	11 6	5 0	5 6				
4 " Octagon Handles, do.	22 0	11 0	16 0	8 0	7 6				
4 " " Waterloo shoulder do.	26 0	13 0	18 0	9 0	8 0				
4 " " Finest Ivory	30 0	15 3	25 0	12 6	10 0				
White Bone, Octagon Handles	11 4	5 8	9 4	4 8	3 6				
Black Bone, rivetted handles	7 0	3 6	6 0	3 0	3 3				

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A complete and arranged list may be had gratis, or by post.

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	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.
To fit an opening 2 8	2 10	3	3 2	3 4	3 6	4	4 3	4 6	
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Range with Oven & Boiler 44 0	47 0	48 0							
Self acting do. with Oven									
& Boiler, Sliding cheek									
& Wrought bars									
			90 0	95 0	100 0	110 0	120 0	140 0	

WIRE BLINDS.—Patent Wove Wire, painted any color, in Mahogany Frames with Bolts, &c., complete, made to any size, 2s. 3d. per square foot. If ornamented with lines, 1s. 6d. each Blind, extra, with lines and corners, 2s. 6d.

	Inches	10	12	14	16	18
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Wove Wire Covers, for Meat (Japanned)	1 9	2 6	3 0	3 6	4 0	
Wire Fire Guards, painted green			1 6	1 9	2 0	
" " Tin'd Iron Wire			2 0	2 6	3 0	
" " Brass Wire				5 6	6 0	

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SELF FEEDING PHENIX STOVE.**

The advantages of this Stove are, that it shews a bright Fire, has a great radiating surface EQUALLY heated, and is very durable, the inside being of strong cast iron. It is quite free from dust and effluvia—is extremely economical in burning—and requires fresh fuel once in 12 hours,—it is ornamental—takes up little room, and is quite free from danger of Fire. Price 3l. 3s. and upwards. A Scale of prices and sizes, with numerous testimonials may be had at C. RALPH & Co's., SOLE LONDON AGENTS, 54, CHEAPSIDE, where it may be seen in operation.

PART I., PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 1, 1843.



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"We have received and perused the first part of this new monthly, published by Clark, of Warwick-lane. It is by the author of 'Valentine Vox,' which was so favourably received by the reading public of the day. The part before us is written in a free and flowing style, and commences by exciting a stirring interest."—*Brighton Herald*.

"This is a humorous novelty, the subject of which is a feature of human life very little noticed. The author will have a verdict in his favour by all who read the first part; he kills not time, but melancholy; and, with a truth to nature, makes amusement profitable to instruction. The illustrations are excellent."—*Bath Journal*.

"Part I. is illustrated by four spirited etchings, and the letter-press is essentially humorous. We have enjoyed many a hearty laugh whilst perusing the number now before us, and regret that we cannot allow the reader of this notice to participate in the enjoyment by appending a few quotations. We hope for a still more intimate acquaintance with SYLVESTER SOUND THE SOMNAMBULIST."—*Derby Reporter*.

"The author of 'Valentine Vox' has commenced a new work under the above happy title. It is to contain the unconscious adventures of a youth, the hero of the story, who, of a quiet and docile disposition in his waking moments, is transformed in his sleep into a very spirit of mischief. His quietude by day, and his perfect unconsciousness of what he has done in his 'night walks,' forms an amusing contrast; and, as the faculties in this state are known to be in a state of exaltation, it may be conceived that adventures of a serious as well as amusing character may be wrought out. The first number commences the work well, and sets Sylvester fairly out on his career. It is accompanied by four illustrations by Onwhyn. The accounts of what has been done by persons endowed by this faculty are so extraordinary, that it is impossible for the wildest fiction to exceed them. A rich harvest of incident may be anticipated from SYLVESTER SOUND."—*Illustrated London News*.

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THE LEAGUE FUND.

(£100,000.)

THE time has now arrived for the friends of Free Trade throughout the kingdom to consider the mode and extent in which they will afford their aid to the labours of the Anti-Corn-Law League for procuring the full and practical recognition of their principles by the Legislature. The plans of the Council of the League have been, for several weeks, before the public. They were distinctly and unreservedly announced in the Address issued on the 28th September last; and, so far as appears from the comments of the press, from private correspondence, or from the resolutions of public meetings, they have obtained general concurrence, as the best and most efficient that can be adopted. The course of action there described has already commenced; the electoral contests that immediately ensued, first in the metropolis, and then in Kendal and Salisbury, were occasions not to be neglected; and the Council forthwith employed the means to which they had pledged themselves for appealing to the understandings and honest feelings of the possessors of the franchise. Public meetings were held from day to day; statements and arguments affecting the great question at issue were forwarded to every elector; the whole registered constituency of the City of London, consisting of about 15,000, was five times addressed, by means of the press and the penny-post; the zeal and intelligence of the non-electors were rendered subsidiary to the movements of the voters; large rewards were offered for such detection of bribery as would lead to its legal conviction; and, without adverting to the results of those contests—results most propitious to the progress of our cause—this merit may at least be claimed for the League, that it did whatever could be done towards upholding the purity and freedom of election, and bestowing upon the favourable verdict which was pronounced, all the worth and weight that are imparted by competent knowledge and sincere conviction.

The sanction of experience and success has thus been affixed to the operations of the League in that portion of them which had most novelty of character, the proposed action upon the electoral body. Former efforts had, no doubt, prepared the way. The outlay of £50,000 upon lectures, tracts, meetings, and the press; the series of large metropolitan meetings in one of the principal theatres; the labours of local associations; and the indefatigable zeal of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, in their mission to the agricultural districts, had plentifully sown the seed, of which we are beginning to reap the harvest. The path of success is now plain before us. A demonstration of opinion, on behalf of Free Trade, by an efficient majority of the electoral body, is a consummation within reach of practical attainment, and at no distant period. The approaching certainty of that result cannot but have its previous influence upon the question. The only essential condition of the abolition of the Food Monopoly is perseverance in the course hitherto pursued; and the only condition of that perseverance on the part of the League, is the supply of the pecuniary funds required for their continued and extended operations.

It cannot be too often repeated, that the Anti-Corn-Law League has no other object than that which its name imports. The abolition of the Food Monopoly will, it is believed, inevitably bring in its train that of all other Monopolies. But the League has no political or ulterior purposes. It interferes not, as foe or ally, with any parties, whether local or national. Its agitation is simply for the recognition of a great principle by the public mind, and the embodiment of that principle in legislative measures. With no question of Taxation does it meddle, provided the Taxation, in whatever mode levied, be for the purpose of national revenue, and not for the profit of a class. The importance of many political and financial questions is not disputed; but the League has not been constituted for effecting reforms in those departments. Even the great good which it is confessedly working in the conduct of elections, by transforming them from personal or party conflicts into a struggle between true principles and false; by making the canvass an investigation of facts and laws in which all are deeply interested, instead of a personal solicitation for the favour of a vote; and by the endeavour to check intimidation and put down bribery; even this is only subsidiary to its one paramount object, for the accomplishment of which, through the agency of electoral opinion, it is needful for that opinion to be deliberate and enlightened in its formation, and free, firm, and decisive in its expression. To this incidental good, as regarded in its bearings upon national character, order, and prosperity, no sincere lover of his country can be indifferent. That the plans of the League imply and require it, in their progress, is no slight addition to its claims for a general and liberal support of such endeavours after the prompt and total abolition of taxation upon food by the Legislature.

Other commercial and trading towns will, it is hoped, call meetings, as has been already done at Manchester, "to consider the best means of aiding the future operations of the League." The subscription, during that meeting of near £13,000, is a strong testimony to the confidence reposed in the Council in the neighbourhood of a large proportion of its members. Nor is it alone to manufacturing localities, to capitalists, or to great meetings, that we look for contributions. To realize a fund of £100,000 requires extended co-operation. We look to landowners, who consult the permanent worth of their estates rather than the temporary pressure of improvident obligations. We look to the growing perception of their own interests by the cultivators of the soil. We look to the honest zeal of the many, the accumulating, though small subscriptions of the middle and working-classes towards the first great confederacy which history records for their defence and rescue from spoliation. The question is eminently theirs; one of immediate and vital urgency, as daily observation and experience of the hard pressure that continues to produce distress and destitution, must make them feel. With sympathy and pride will their names be recorded on a list which will soon become the noble muster-roll of the triumphant abolitionists of taxation upon food. They will earn their "charter and freehold of rejoicing" in our common victory over the most unjust and oppressive, the most impoverishing, demoralizing, and destructive impost ever inflicted upon a people by the blind cupidity of a Class Interest.

The prompt success of the present appeal will, it is calculated, render any future one unnecessary. The Council will be put by it in possession of the entire Registration of the Kingdom, and in communication with all its Constituencies. Every city, town, and county will have had the question brought fully under its consideration. The power of public opinion will have been fully developed. Truth, Justice, and Humanity will be brought face to face with usurpation and oppression; the rights of the many and the robberies of the few will be confronted for trial before the Institutions of our country. We cannot doubt the result, for "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



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HAVING now passed the ordeal of experiment for a long period, and become recognised by the public at large as the Family Paper of largest circulation and influence in the Weekly London Press, and as the *only* illustrated Journal—if *truth* and *news* are to be associated with art-embellishments—it is unnecessary (when an important improvement in what may be called the statistics of the paper requires a new public announcement) to resume the form of a mere prospectus—or to recapitulate the principles and policy which have made themselves so thoroughly known throughout the Empire, and we have reason to believe not more known than respected and approved.

But in proportion as the ILLUSTRATED NEWS has proved itself *established*—in proportion as it has found some imitations of it dying, and others clinging hopelessly to life—in proportion as the public have rushed towards it the more eagerly when luring promises tempted them upon rival paths—in proportion as demand upon it has grown into a prosperity beyond its means—the proprietors have felt the difficulty of their emergency—and deemed themselves compelled to repose upon their steady and unchanging circulation, until they could command the opportunity of returning more cordially the public embrace.

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☞ The ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS can be had, if ordered, of Booksellers and Newsmen, price 6d., and may be sent free of postage to all parts of the United Kingdom.

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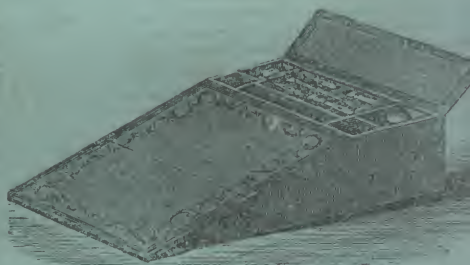
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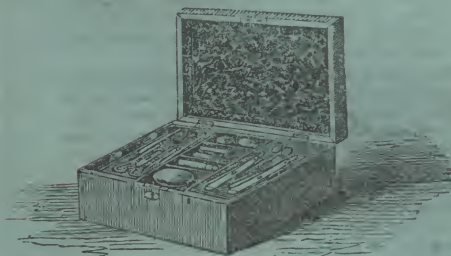
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